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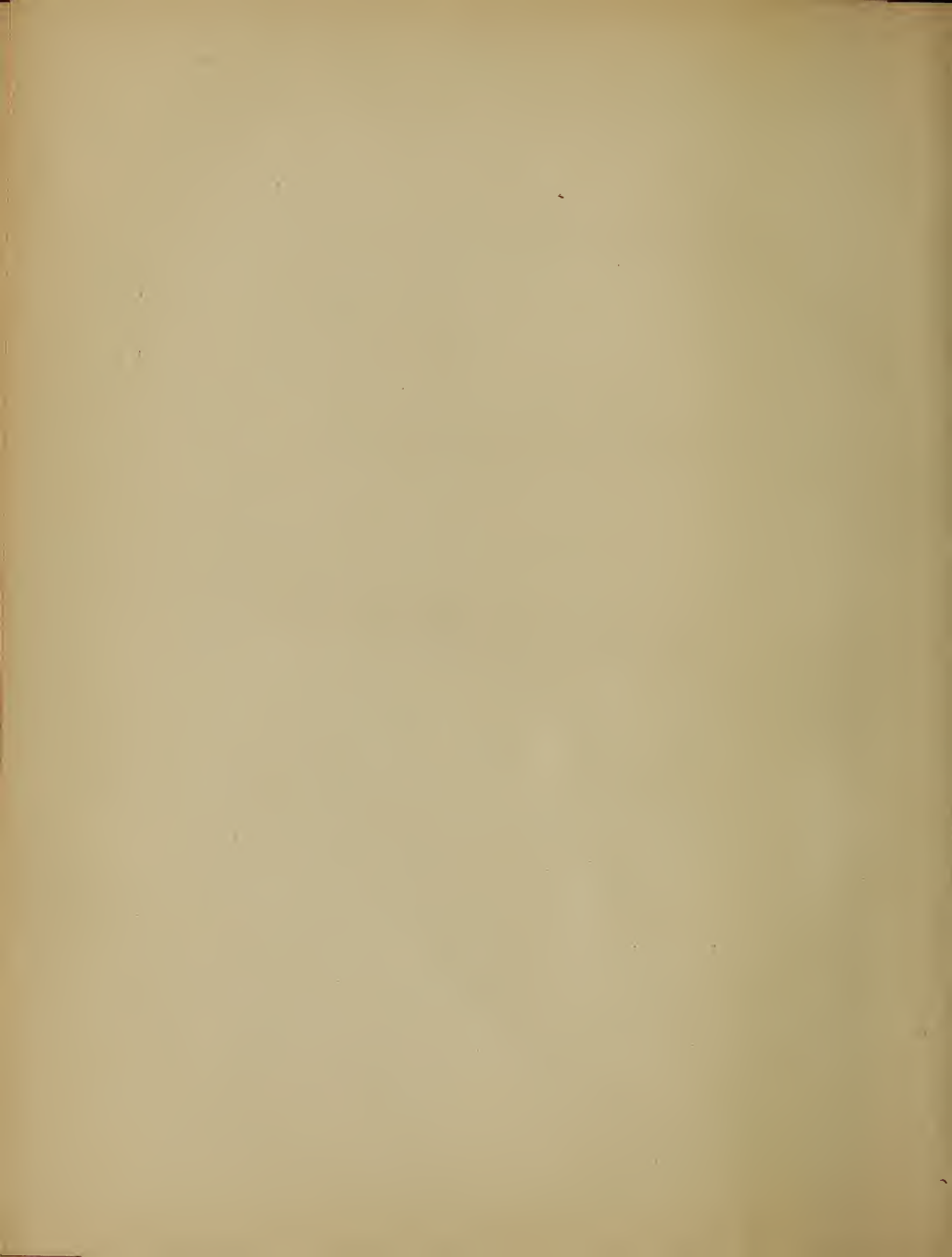
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STEPS IN THE PATHS OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A FORTNIGHT OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT.

BY

E. R. C.

*By Edith Rutgers Crosby.*

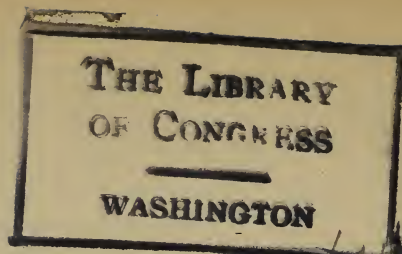


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THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH WARMEST  
AFFECTION

TO

MY FATHER.

FEBRUARY 27th, 1882.



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## I.

### THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS.

*"I have called you friends."*—

JOHN XV. 16.

**T**RUE friendship must be mutual and reciprocal. A one-sided friendship is no friendship at all. To love without return may be noble, inspiring, elevating in its tendencies and effects, but it is not friendship. To devote our lives, and concentrate our interests upon one who does not need us, who looks upon us with kindly patronage, but who feels no necessity for our love, no void in his heart without it—this is not the ideal of friendship, and our Saviour would not offer us this hollow mockery of the purest and tenderest relationship possible to man. Upon His lips, instead of losing any of its fullest human meaning by reason of His exalted Godhead, the word "friend," so dear and precious in its wide significance, is rather expanded to its noblest dimensions, and filled to the brim with all the

tenderest and deepest richness of love. Jesus Christ could not say, "I have called you *friends*," when He meant "followers" or "disciples," or even loved and cared for dependents. He must use the word in its fullest meaning if He use it at all—and He has used it. Do we appreciate enough the precious truths implied in this sentence? Do we enter sufficiently into our glorious privilege of claiming the friendship of Jesus?

When He said, "I have called you friends," it was not only as a mark of kindness and encouragement to His disciples; it was not only to fill them with comfort and joy; no, it was more than this: it was the expression of an inner yearning of His own soul, it was the satisfaction of a need in His humanity. He longed for friendship, His loving human heart felt the craving for human affection, and His warmth of generous impulse rose in deep desire to overflow upon some dear human friend. Can we not see this all through the touching scenes of the Gospel narrative? His whole intercourse with man is marked by this underlying influence. We can almost imagine that we hear the ring of a great longing



for friendship in His tender tones as He speaks with one and another of the men and women around Him. We see Him apparently with difficulty restraining Himself from going before the time which He knew was the ordained one to the rescue of His "friend Lazarus," and weeping at the grave in the grief of a friend separated from one He loves, though but for a short time, by death. We hear the sad yearning of His troubled question to the friends upon whom He would have loved to lean in tender reliance: "Will ye also go away?" The last chapters of St. John's Gospel are filled full of hints of this human desire for friendship which the "disciple whom Jesus loved" knew best to record. The 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters are the deepest, truest, tenderest outpourings of a human friendship only strengthened and increased because it was the friendship of the Son of God. So dependent was our blessed Master upon the support and affection of His friends that in the deepest desolation of grief, foreseeing the desertion of those dearest to Him, He exclaims, "Ye shall leave me alone," and only with the quick afterthought of the well-beloved Son, He corrects

His human utterance by the divine reassurance, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

In the last great agony He interrupts His impassioned prayer twice to seek the sympathy and love of His "friends," and pathetic indeed sounds down to us through the centuries one of the saddest utterances of the "Man of Sorrows," "What, could ye not watch with me one hour!" The intensity of sorrow and disappointment and reproach in the look which He turned upon the denying Peter, who can fathom? The bitter weeping which it occasioned gives us some hint of the sadness of wounded love which it conveyed. And, lastly, how touching a picture of tender friendship do we find in the simple morning meal, laid out with the forethought of a love to which even the practical details of common life are not too trivial to be glorified with its golden light; the fire of coals, around which the weary fishermen, chilled with their night-long labor, could warm their numbed limbs, the fish and bread spread out with careful affection, ready to furnish a warm and welcome breakfast to the friends to whom

the Son of God found it His pleasure to minister. No agony of death, no glory of resurrection, could quench the love in the Master's heart; His three times repeated, "Lovest thou me?" shows the old longing, intensified rather than dulled by the many marvelous experiences of the past days.

Ah, my friends, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! We can not fear change in that perfect character; we need not dread lest one trait of the Man Christ Jesus should vanish from the glorified life of the ascended Lord. He has taken our humanity upon Him, and He will not let it fall from Him. Surely He still looks back upon His earthly life with its human friendships and associations, and the old longing for love in His human heart still asks to be satisfied by the friendship of each and every one of us. Tenderly, sweetly, quaintly through the ages rings the Word of our ascended Saviour, breathing from His royal throne the simple, affectionate tone of pleading friendship: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Notice the deep insight of friendship which made Him speak of the supping as mutual—"I will sup with him, *and he with me.*" No setting out of costly dishes to feast an honored guest. It is the knock of a friend seeking admittance to our innermost domestic privacy, looking forward with pleasant anticipation to the homely meal by the friendly hearth. Let us not dream that Jesus Christ is independent of our love and friendship even in Heaven. If we neglect this blessed privilege, if we thrust Him from the door instead of opening it wide to receive the precious guest, His voice of sad reproof will call to us as it did to Saul, "Why persecutest thou me?"

The need of friendship, then, the desire to be loved, must be reciprocal,—and we have seen how fully our Master meets this requirement. But there are other obligations in a perfect friendship—necessary elements, without which, at least the highest and noblest form of friendship can not exist. Let us consider some of these—and see how completely our Lord shows us the full-orbed symmetry of all that friendship can be.

And first, there must be *loyalty*—a loyalty which will proudly acknowledge the bond of

friendship—a loyalty which will plead for the friend, which will take his side, no matter where or when. A friend who was ashamed of his friendship, who denied it to the world, who heard his friend maligned and held his peace—such a man were surely not worthy of the name. Loyalty is a necessity to true friendship. Hear what our Heavenly Friend says of those who have deserved His friendship, who have “overcome”: “I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.” There will be no denial of the poor, unworthy friends, there will be confession full and perfect before the multitudes of Heaven. Not only does He confess, but “He liveth to make intercession” for us. Loyalty true and helpful—interceding for us, confessing His knowledge of, and friendship for us. This requirement does Jesus meet fully and completely. Alas! can we say the same of ourselves? Do we confess Him before men? Do we intercede for Him with those who will not receive Him? There is a great sadness in the thought that such friendship as He has offered should be slighted—and yet, a Peter could deny Him! Let us try to be loyal to

the Friend who rejoices in our loyalty, and yearns to hear our frank confession of Him.

Secondly, there must be *constancy* in a perfect friendship. Fear of change, the possibility of love dying into indifference—there is no more ghastly disturber of the peace of friendship than this. From Him who has called us “friends” we need dread no such sorrow. With Him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning”; “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end.” “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever,” has left as His last words to His friends the promise: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And “He is faithful that promised.” We can trust to His constancy through all trials and sorrows. Can we trust our own? Let us pray humbly day by day that we may be faithful to Him—that we may “endure to the end,” that when He cometh He shall find us watching.

Thirdly, there must be full and entire *sympathy* between friends. A sympathy which enters into the joys and sorrows of the friend as though they were one’s own. A sym-  
pa-



thy which soothes the foolish fears gently, which satisfies the anxious doubt with kindness, which bears inconsistency and ignorance with tender love. Is not this the very description of our Lord? He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and having been "tempted in all points like as we are," He enters into our temptations with true and sincere sympathy. He encourages us with His soothing voice, saying, "My friends, be not afraid." He goes to a doubting Thomas and gives him the proof He desired. He is ever ready to enter into all our joys and sorrows, to help and support us in trouble, to make Himself *one* with us in utter self-forgetting sympathy. There is no sympathy so deep and rich as that of Jesus. And it is ours if we will take it. Shall we neglect the benefit of so great a blessing?

Another very necessary, very essential requirement of friendship is a perfect *understanding*, a frankness and openness which leaves no secret hidden from the friend, which makes him a participator in every interest, in every ambition, in every joy or sorrow, which shares all its knowledge, which confides its inner-

most thoughts, trusting the friend to understand and to sympathize. How fully, how deeply, how beautifully does the friendship of Jesus Christ stand this test ! He confides to us all His plans, all His hopes, all His ambitions, trusting the furtherance of His mighty schemes into our feeble hands ; He talks to us with all the frank intimacy of a loving friend, giving us deep insights into His inner life, revealing for our help even His secret hours of communion with His Father. He says : “ I have called you friends, *for* all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” We are instructed by Him in all the knowledge of Heaven. His teaching is not that of a schoolmaster, but of a friend who wishes the one He loves to know what He knows.

“ And what delights can equal those  
That stir the spirit’s inner deeps,  
When one that loves, but knows not, reaps  
A truth from one that loves and knows ? ”

Our Friend wishes us to share everything with Him, He goes to prepare a place for us, “ that where I am, there ye may be also.” We

are called to His "fellowship," He wishes us to be "partakers of His glory," and also, deepest, most significant sign of the highest friendship, He wishes us to be "partakers of His sufferings."

And here is the last and chiefest requirement of friendship—it is the obligation to *self-sacrifice*. It is in this greatest and final test that the Son of God has exalted the name of friendship to such a height of glory, that it should never be degraded to designate any of the selfish companionships of ignoble men. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And this is the love which Jesus has shown us. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." There is not one of us, no matter how weak or frail, who can not claim this last and greatest sign of the friendship of Jesus, and say: "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*!"

Such is the friendship of our Master. This is what He means when He says, "I have called you friends" — this, and more, much more, which we can only guess at dimly now,

but which year by year unfolds itself in larger, deeper meaning to the Christian who responds to the Saviour's desire for friendship with an answering cry, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

But as we noticed in the beginning, so let us come back at the conclusion to the fact that friendship must be reciprocal. We have seen how fully Jesus meets every requirement, every obligation of friendship, but let us not forget that if we would enter into the joy of this Divine friendship, we too must lay upon ourselves obligations which can not be broken without weakening the bond and imperiling the closeness of union. We must yearn and long for the friendship which will not be denied us if we hunger and thirst for it. We must be loyal in our confession, constant in our love, sympathizing keenly with our Friend, trusting Him with all our secrets, learning of Him with confidence in His teaching, willingly entering into fellowship with Him, even though it be a fellowship of suffering—and, lastly, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for Him. He desires that, as He laid down His life for us, we should be willing

to lay down our *wills* for Him,—that we offer up ourselves, a living sacrifice, to Him. “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” We must be obedient, even as He was “obedient unto death.” This may seem a severe requirement, but love will make it easy. It was because He *loved* us that He gave Himself for us. And surely we must love Him since “He first loved us.” And love, earnest, warm, rejoicing in the power of doing something for its object, such love, nourished and encouraged in our hearts, will make the doing what He commands a pleasure rather than a labor, a satisfaction of our friendship in the performance of which we will glory.

The friend of Jesus! What a title for any one of us to wear! Precious in its deep and wonderful significance of meaning! Inspiring to all highest and noblest endeavors, soothing and comforting in the darkest trials! Having been called by God “unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” let us walk “worthy of the vocation” wherewith we are called — remembering that *He* has called us “*friends!*”

## THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.



THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—  
 “Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone  
 Which I at last must break my heart upon,  
 For all God’s charge to His high angels may  
 Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday  
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run  
 Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun,  
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?  
 The cock crows coldly. Go and manifest  
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear!  
 For when thy final need is dreariest,  
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here.  
 My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,  
 ‘Because *I know* this man, let him be clear!’”

MRS. BROWNING.

“When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard. . . . Without a friend thou canst not well live; and if Jesus be not above all a friend to thee, thou shalt be indeed sad and desolate. . . . And if thou shouldst drive Him from thee, and lose Him, unto whom wilt thou flee, and whom wilt thou then seek for thy friend? . . . Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself. Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be beloved: who alone is found Good and Faithful above all friends. . . . Drink of the Lord’s cup with hearty affection, if thou desire to be His friend, and to have part with Him.”

A’KEMPIS.



## II.

## REFLECTED LIGHT.

*"Arise, shine, for thy light is come,  
and the glory of the Lord is risen  
upon thee."*—Is. lx. 1.



THE light by which we shine is a *reflected* one. It is not the light which shines direct and fresh from the heart of the Sun, but it is the Sun's light caught and reflected upon the bright pebbles on the beach, or from the glittering vane of some lofty cathedral; orbing itself into shining miniature suns in the drops of dew on a blade of grass, or illuminating with soft rose-tint glow the snow-clad mountain-tops. Man's office and calling is thus to reflect the glory of God. Even Jesus Christ in His human personality filled this vocation, as it is written: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of *God*" shined in our hearts "in the face of Jesus Christ."

But how can the Central Light be reflected?

How did Jesus reflect the glory of His Father? By His *life*. "The life was the light of men." His Life was the reflection of the glory of God, the image of that hidden and ineffable radiance. And in our poor, dimmed, stained lives we too must strive to throw out upon our fellows some broken rays of our Father's glory. We are often anxious and troubled to know how to reach our friends and companions with some help, how to draw the attention of those among them who are thoughtless of the future, to some higher range of feeling. In speaking of religious things to them we are often detained, not from fear or shame, but because we are afraid of harming instead of helping. We do not know how to begin the subject; any words we would say sound like *cant*, and we dread turning our friends away from the truth by forcing a distasteful conversation upon them. It is necessary to use great delicacy and discrimination. Inappropriate attempts do more harm than good. And yet we have a duty even here. There are moments when a little word may greatly help, there are opportunities when the conscience may be roused, and the heart touched;—these must

be seized eagerly and prayerfully. But often words *can not* reach our friends, often the days slip by without a chance of speaking for Jesus. Can we, then, do nothing for Him? Ah, there is a greater weapon than speech which we need never lay aside, there is the silent influence of a life shining with God's light, there is the reflection which we can cast at all hours and in all circumstances upon those around us. There are men in whose society you may feel nearer to Jesus, although they do not mention His name; there are women of whom it may be said like Mrs. Browning's "Kate," "Men at her side grew nobler, girls purer."

But this light can only emanate from us in proportion as we put ourselves in a position to be shined upon. Nearness to our Master, a face turned toward Him in constant love and devotion—without this our lives will be but dark and lustreless. It is only by looking into Heaven and seeing "the glory of God" that the face of a man can become, as it were, "the face of an angel." It is the highest mountain peak which glows most vividly with all the rainbow colors of the setting sun, its snows

tinged with brilliant rose hues, its little châlets catching the glory in every sparkling pane of their tiny windows, and flashing back the heavenly brilliancy with a radiance which chains the upward gaze of the dwellers in the valley at its base.

Let us try in like manner to rise into the sunlight, for we are not "sufficient of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God." "And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face" (because the glory which shone upon it was the glory direct from the awful, blinding brilliancy of the great Jehovah), "but we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."


And not only must we put ourselves into a right position to be shined upon, but we must retain the light within us. We must draw in the rays of the Sun before we can shed them upon others. There must be a latent light in our souls, like the glow in the heart of the diamond. The Christian must let the warmth and radiance of the love of Jesus Christ permeate his own spirit before he can by his example or influence shed any light upon those

around him. He must keep the rays of the Sun of Righteousness locked in his own heart first if he would have others see "the God within him light his face."

And, lastly, the more highly polished the metal or the precious stone is, the more brilliantly it reflects the light. The roughnesses must be smoothed by careful, pains-taking self-control, the untrue angles must be cut down by self-sacrifice, the surface must be evened by daily work and spiritual exercise, even trials and sorrows must be borne patiently, knowing that they will give the character an added lustre which will more worthily reflect our Master's image.

It is to those who earnestly endeavor to clothe themselves in the glory of this reflected Light of God, that the promise is given: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." And having glorified Him on the earth, we shall be called to add our faint and humble light to the brilliancy of that "holy Jerusalem," which St. John saw, "descending out of heaven from God; having the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious."

(THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY A SERMON ON "SOUL  
SHADOWS.")

HE people brought their sick into the street  
That haply when St. Peter that way passed  
His very shadow might be on them cast  
With influence healing. For, with faith replete  
With superstition, they but held it meet  
That holiness should heal ; and boldly classed  
Together soul and body. That is past.  
Our age is wiser ; yet we must not treat  
This people's thought as folly. Let us feel  
Our *souls* cast shadows wheresoe'er we go,  
Unconscious ones, but none the less most real,  
The influence of what we *are* we throw  
Around us ever. Shall our shadows heal  
The souls they fall on, or increase their woe ?

E. R. C.



## III.

## LIFE AND LIGHT.

*"The Life was the Light of Men."*

—JOHN i. 4.



IFE is light. There is no better synonym for the one word than the other. We praise the life in the sparkling diamond, or in the warm light of a southern landscape; and we speak of the light which a bright and healthy personality sheds upon us, and of the "sunny" presence of some whole-souled friend, whose life is overflowing with cheering vitality. In the Bible the terms are frequently used as equivalents, and interchanged with a freedom which sees no difference in them. "The light of life"; "the light of the living"; "with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light." And, in direct contrast, using the two opposite terms: "The valley of the shadow of death." Life, full, intense, pulsing with healthy heart-

beats, has always inspired humanity with the same joyousness, the same glad vigor which one feels in stepping out of the darkened house into a great overwhelming flood of warm and generous sunlight. And in the very heart and centre of this interchange of idea, quickening it all with the intensity of an Eternal and Supernatural Truth, we find the grand central Synonym : “ *The Life, which was the Light.*”

The death of Jesus in its tragic pathos, with its great truth of reconciliation to God, its mighty sacrifice of redeeming love, appeals so strongly to the heart of the Christian that we are apt to forget, in our natural clinging to the comfort of its teaching, that, although it was indeed a necessary offering for us, it was an hour of intensest horror, and that there was darkness over all the land, darkness even for a moment in the Heart of our Saviour, as that Life was giving Itself over to death, and with faculties dimmed, and body racked with pain which blinded the clear vision of the soul, He cried in utmost agony of spirit, “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ” Truly we are reconciled by His death, but “ much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by

His life." There could be no lasting reconciliation without a continued and progressive salvation from sin. And this salvation can only come by the full and perfect Life, past, present, and to come, of our Blessed Master. It is only by a contemplation of His Holy Life that the day can dawn, and the daystar arise in our hearts. Let us try to gather some of the rays of that great Light, and direct them to shine upon our paths.

There are three phases of the Life of Jesus Christ, the central one of which is generally the one dwelt upon, and with reason, as it is concerning this life, in its Incarnation, that we have had the clearest and fullest revelation, although, even in it, there are silences which no sound has awakened, mysteries which as yet we can not penetrate, awful secrets before which we must stand with bowed heads, and worship in trustful ignorance.

There is, however, some light thrown upon all three of the periods in the life of our Sun of Righteousness, the period before His Incarnation, His life upon earth as man, and His continued life after His ascension. In the old dispensation we have only vague hints,

dim rays enlightening the waning night and prophesying dawn ; but the light thrown from them is always a life-giving one, always comforting and inspiring with hope of the coming day. The mystic King of Salem dispensing "bread and wine," ministering to the wants of the hungry and thirsty, and supplementing physical help by the invocation of spiritual blessing, reminding us in the narrative of many centuries beforehand, of the breaking of bread and pouring out of wine, with its accompanying blessing, which has become one of the most cherished memories, and dearest sacraments of the Christian Church ; the angel of the Lord cheering the famished and desolate Hagar, urging her to return to her home and her duty, comforting her with promises of support and help ; again, appearing to disheartened Gideon, inspiring him with fresh hope, and saying to him in the very words which afterward soothed the fears and quieted the doubts of the saddened and wavering disciples of the Divine Man, "Peace be unto thee, fear not" ; the form "like the Son of God," strengthening with His presence the three heroic Jews in their fiery furnace, walking

with them in sweet companionship through the flames of their trial, and giving them power through His might to withstand their fury. In these, as in many other more vague and indistinct hints, we see the Life which was the Light of men shining upon the earth, illumining its dark places, ministering to the wants of the sad, discouraged, and tempted among His brethren, with a human sympathy, a tender insight, which foreshadowed with wonderful soft radiance the incarnated Life which "went about doing good." The latent humanity enclosed within the Divinity of Him who was in the beginning with God, gleams forth from the earliest record of His Life, that Life which was manifested for our salvation. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them."

The second period in the total Life of Christ is the one of the Incarnation with which we are best acquainted, and whose comforts and lessons have been so often dwelt upon that there seems nothing left to say. The great Light bursting in full-orbed splendor upon a world which loved darkness better than light. The Ideal of all noble and aspiring hearts

made a blessed Reality ; the great Example of all future ages lived before the eyes of all men, which to follow and to know is life eternal. Humanity raised and ennobled by the Perfect man, whose law of love is made possible by His own keeping of that law in every word and action of His human life.

“ The Man most man, with tenderest human hands,  
Works best for men,—as God in Nazareth. . . .  
Subsists no law of life outside of life,  
No perfect manners without Christian souls ;  
The Christ Himself had been no Law-giver,  
Unless He had given His life, too, with the law.”

In this earthly Life the same great motive impelled Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, the angel of His presence had been saving men since the creation of the world ; in a larger and fuller sense “ He *came into* the world to *save* sinners.”

And, lastly, the Life of Christ did not end upon the Cross ; there is a third period of intense and eternal significance. “ He liveth to make intercession ” for us ; “ *wherefore* He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Again the note, clear



and ringing, of salvation by the Life is struck. The human and yet divine Elder Brother, touched with our infirmities, having been tempted like as we are in all points, taking back with Him, even to the heavenly glory which He had with God before the world began, a remembrance vivid and everlasting of the human life with its sorrows and its joys its temptations and weaknesses, this dear, sympathizing High Priest has passed into the heavens to continue His work of salvation, to live that we might live with Him.


What must we do to receive the full benefit of this life-giving radiance? How can we be illuminated with the "light from heaven above the brightness of the sun"? As we have seen that the light with which we shine is a reflected one, so, too, is our life, the life which He has promised to save from sin, not intrinsic, but from Him. It is the vitality, fresh and healthy, of the sound man, infused into the veins of the invalid, and coursing through his body with the strengthening and healing influence of new, revived life. God has "given to the Son to have life in Himself"; but "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His



Son." It is only as we are in Him and He in us that we can live. Close communion with Him, increasing love toward Him, a nearer following after Him, this is the secret of life. "He that hath the Son hath life." "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him." "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." "He that followeth me shall have the light of life."

These are the key-notes by which to guide our lives. To keep constantly and consciously in His presence (for it is the angel of His presence which saves), to assimilate His Life with ours through grace, to absorb His divine light into our souls by the attracting power of love, to follow the great example of His life upon earth, trying to walk even as He walked, by patient, prayerful effort ; in this way, and in this way only, can our reconciliation to God be complemented and made complete in our salvation from sin. The Light which is the Light of the world will shine into our hearts, the Life which is eternal will throb and pulse through our veins, strengthening our weak resolutions, giving new energy to the fulfill-

ment of our duties, infusing fresh joy into our daily existence. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings"; and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

"HO' truths in manhood darkly join,  
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,  
We yield all blessing to the name  
Of Him that made them current coin.

"For wisdom dealt with mortal powers  
Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
When truth embodied in a tale  
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds  
More strong than all poetic thought."

*"In Memoriam,"* TENNYSON.

"'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
O life, not death, for which we pant ;  
More life, and fuller, that I want."

TENNYSON.

## IV.

## PERFECTION.

*"The Perfect Man."*—EPHESIANS iv. 13.

**T**HE exhortation, "Be ye perfect," staggers us as we read it. Why was such a hard command given, which surely is one impossible to be executed by weak and struggling mortals? There is more wisdom and kindness hidden in this seemingly hard word of the Master than we can at first discover.

An Ideal is always necessary to man—something raised above and beyond him to which he may press forward. Without an aim ever before him, not yet attained, eluding his grasp, and still beckoning him onward, the energies of man relax their tension, his faculties become inactive, and he sinks into helplessness and weakness. Perfection stands before the Christian's eyes, a mark for his struggling ambition, as wealth, power, fame, or any of the

numerous objects to which the heart of man is drawn, elicit the energies and vitalize the forces of the world with an upward-striving impulse. And perfection is an aim which in this life we can never say with self-satisfied contentment that we have reached. If Christ had placed a lower standard before us we might, with the blind self-conceit of humanity, fancy ourselves, after some striving and struggling, to have attained it ; we might even answer with the young ruler, in his childishly boastful, and yet sincerely-meant profession of integrity, " All these have I kept."

But Jesus Christ always gives us a higher Ideal than the one which we think we have realized. He knows that the sense of having something beyond to strive for is the very secret of growth in grace ; indeed, not only of growth, but even of keeping our present stand-point and not sliding backward. In order to " press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ," we must be able to say : " I count not myself to have apprehended." As some one has said : " He who aims at the sky shoots higher than he who aims at the tree, even though he

does not reach the sky." To have the aim high is the true rule of Christian progress.

But the mere word "Perfection" would be a vague and undefined object of ambition, one which we could only blindly grope for, not knowing what it might be when it was attained, and being deterred and frightened by its dim immensity of idea; we must have some known standard before we can feel the impulse to strive after it, some example of success in the difficult path we have started upon if we would have our feet press eagerly forward. Such a standard, such an example has been lived for us. The word *Perfection* has become a vital Reality. Jesus Christ stands before us in the radiant, transparent whiteness of His perfect Life, and having given us the command, "Be ye perfect," He explains and simplifies it by saying, "If thou wilt be perfect . . . come and follow me."


It is true that the contemplation of this glorious Ideal of the Christian's ambition must make us shrink most pitifully in our own estimations; seeing the beauty of His perfectness we feel all the more strongly the distance between us, and discouragement may

seize upon us with a sense of the impossibility of attainment. But let us remember that His Perfection stands as a pledge of our final perfection if we believe in Him. "Being made perfect He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Patient continuance in well-doing, "looking unto Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith," will constantly lessen the distance between us, and, notwithstanding countless slips and falls, will nevertheless keep our courage up, and incite us to ever-increasing activity of progress. And our progress, our growth in energy of action, our constantly enlarging visions of what we should be, and what we may become, is what our loving Saviour in His clear insight, in His marvelous comprehension of our characters, wished to stimulate and encourage in His commandment of, "Be ye perfect." He does not urge us beyond our strength; He is willing that Eternity should complete what Time has begun, He takes with tender indulgence the desire for perfection as a partial satisfaction, the earnest will for the imperfect deed. The longing to reach our Ideal, to attain the ambition of our

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lives, gives an impetus to our Christianity, which helps us very far toward the fulfillment of our aim.

“  TILL, through our paltry stir and strife,  
Glows down the wished Ideal,  
And longing moulds in clay what Life  
Carves in the marble Real ;

“ To let the new life in, we know,  
Desire must ope the portal ;—  
Perhaps the longing to be so  
Helps make the soul immortal.

“ Longing is God's fresh heavenward will  
With our poor earthward striving ;  
We quench it that we may be still  
Content with merely living ;

“ But, would we learn that heart's full scope  
Which we are hourly wronging,  
Our lives must climb from hope to hope  
And realize our longing.”

Leaving the consideration of our own strivings for perfection, how blessed is the thought of the perfectness of Christ ! What a relief it is to turn from the disappointing efforts to be satisfied with the characters of




ourselves or our neighbors, to that one Perfect Character whose unchanging, reliable certainty of complete goodness is a firm foundation under our feet, and in turning to whom we *know*, with a sigh of relief, that we can find the utter satisfaction of our demands upon character, that in Him we can not be disappointed however exalted an ideal we may cherish! There are times when we turn with a sense of distrust from any human companionship, when we can not rely upon any one in the calm assurance that we can trust their judgment, that we can be sure of their affection, that we can not be deceived by their characters. We shrink within ourselves, and feel that we must only rely on our own individual judgment, that no one else can help us or give us advice, for that others are as likely to err as ourselves. This is sad enough, but, when after many trials, after hard struggles, earnest resolves, even fervent prayers, we find the sad story repeated that we can not trust *ourselves* for a single moment; when we find the slight improvement in character, at which we had been working so hard, fall and crumble to nothing in one unguarded instant, leaving

the whole work to be done over again ; when we grow from bitter experience to distrust every thought, and word, and deed of our own, and to suspect a flaw in our best efforts ; —then indeed comes despair, the very saddest kind of despair which arises from utter disappointment in humanity, utter weariness at the imperfections which meet us at every turn in our intercourse with others and our communion with ourselves ! And it is when these moods are upon us that the thought of Jesus Christ's perfection comes to us with its strength of consolation. If there were no other gift which He had brought us but simply His entire perfectness, it would have been enough to infuse new life into our souls, and save us from the despondency of unrealized desires, to make us " free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt, which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings."

To know that there was *one* perfect man, is to make us more tolerant of humanity, both in ourselves and others. And when we are wearied with struggles against our own imperfections, or deceived in the high estimation we had held of some friend, we can confidently

rest our tired, aching hearts against the loving breast of our Perfect Master, whose arms are ever open to receive us, and of whom even a Pilate was forced to say, "I find no fault in Him!" No fault! There is rest and refreshment in the very sound, so strange in this world of sin!

And thus, keeping Christ's life before us as the Ideal to which we must diligently press, the Pattern which we must follow in close and loving imitation; and guarding within our hearts the cheering and blessed remembrance of His perfection, which He not only has given us as a reliance and trust and comfort, but which He also promises that we may share with Him; "I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One";—thus may we run with patience the race that is set before us; "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *unto a perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

“HEREFORE to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?  
Builder and Maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!

What, have fear of change from Thee, who art ever the same ?

Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands ?

There shall never be one lost good ! What was shall live as before ;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;

What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more ;

On earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect round. . . . .

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by and by."

R. BROWNING.

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THEN keep thy conscience sensitive ;

No inward token miss ;

And go where grace entices thee ;—

Perfection lies in this."

FABER.

## V.

## CAPTIVE THOUGHTS.

*"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*—2 COR. x. 5.



ANOTHER hard commandment, this ! To bring into obedience actions, words, yes, but *thoughts* ! To bring into captivity shadowy forms, insubstantial, intangible, vague, which flit and glide about the heart, hiding in its crevices, disappearing when sought for, changing color like the chameleon when touched, fading like ghosts when the light of day is turned upon them, phantasms which come under no law, which own no Master ! Surely to lead these lawless, inconsequent, mutinous thoughts as captured enemies, as serviceable slaves, to Christ, bidding Him command them, pledging them to do His bidding, this must be the highest pinnacle of Christian excellence, the greatest con-

quest of the soldier of Christ. The warfare with the thoughts of our hearts is not like the regular and honest campaign, where foe meets foe on open ground, where all the forces are mustered, and one knows what and how one is fighting. No, these insidious enemies lie in ambush, they shoot their arrows from behind the trees, they steal noiselessly into our fortress by night, they disguise themselves as friends and come to us offering us aid—they play the part of counselors, and sit in unsuspected dignity at our council of war, advising with deceptive plausibility the measures which shall work our ruin. We nurse the peaceful, harmless, apparently lifeless creature in our bosom, and only discover its power for evil when the warmth of our heart has awakened it, and it pierces us with its cruel sting! What Christian has not felt the wounds of evil thoughts fostered unsuspectingly in his soul? We are startled and alarmed when suddenly an evil suggestion, a selfish inspiration, a deadly temptation springs full of force and life into our notice. We had not dreamt of such a thing, we had not consciously fostered it; it seemed to leap into existence without



having had source or cause. How came it in our hearts? At such a time the command to bring every thought into obedience seems cruelly impossible of being followed, and the conquest of this most subtle foe, utterly, hopelessly unattainable.

Is there no way of victory, no hope of success? Certainly there is, for God does not mock us by laying upon us heavy burdens grievous to be borne, which He will not help us move. With His help even thoughts may be made captives, willing captives, doing good service, working bravely and helpfully for the advancement of our holiness and the glory of God. For, being made originally in the image of God, there is no impulse, no tendency of our humanity to which a heavenward direction may not be given. The wrong thoughts which frighten us and work us such dire mischief, are not foreign enemies, but *rebels*, having deserted their true allegiance, their first and only satisfying service; and they will find no rest until they are once more turned into the right channel, having found which they will fall naturally and joyfully into the work which alone they were created to fulfill.



But the subjugation of rebellious subjects is often more difficult than the conquest of foreign foes. Let us consider some of the dangers of this warfare, and how we may meet and overcome them.

And first, almost unconsciously, little dreaming of the sad results, we are apt ourselves to encourage our enemies. When accused of this we feel inclined to cry, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But let us think a moment. Are there not thoughts faint, vague, but dangerously sweet, laden with soft persuasive poison of the will, or senses or intellect, thoughts which seem too indefinite, too secret, to harm our lives, and which we do not turn from readily, indulging ourselves in the subtle charms which they breathe, although deep down in our consciences we feel that they are evil? Macbeth nursed and fostered the thought of ambition in his heart, without dreaming of the possibility of compassing it by unjust measures. The poison worked secretly and insidiously, and the tender-hearted, honorable man became a murderer. The thoughts of wrong and evil come to us disguised as angels, and we find

them "pleasant to the eyes," but alas, if we indulge them, if we encourage the first weak thought of wrong which could be so easily thrust out and overcome, we will find to our horror that the thin edge of the wedge has been inserted, that our fortifications have been undermined, and that when the enemy shows himself in all the hideousness of his undisguised deformity, we are too weak to conquer him, and must succumb to the strength of his attack; from being too indulgent masters we have become slaves bound hand and foot.

Again, the wrong thoughts may creep into our hearts through our lack of watchfulness, our indolence, and drowsiness. "*Watch* and pray lest ye enter into temptation." It was "while men *slept*" that the enemy sowed the tares. It is by keeping wide-awake to all holy influences, by exercising our hearts in devotion and love, that its doors are kept closed to the foe.

For, thirdly, if we succeed in turning out any evil thought, the only way to *keep* it out is to fill its place immediately with some thought of God, some right thought which may hold the vacant place against any return.

It is only when he finds the house from which he has been expelled *empty*, that the evil spirit gathers seven others worse than himself and returns to dwell in it. The thought of God, the thought of Jesus Christ, the thought of charity to men, all pure, true thoughts which come when earnestly prayed for to fill the heart of the child of God, these are the most potent aids to keep banished thoughts from the mind. But we sometimes find that the good thoughts are slow in coming, that they do not answer to our call for help, that there seems some obstacle to their entrance. If they do not enter readily we may be very sure that there *is* an obstacle, some hindrance to their free flow, and we must examine our hearts to find the cause. There may be a great slough of selfishness deep down in our lives from which emanates all the foul miasma of thought which we deplore. We must drain it thoroughly before the pure, crystal clearness of the water of life can well up within us. Stagnant selfishness may be the cause of all the undreamed-of impurities of thought which horrify us when they rise to the surface, and in its deadly air no right thought, no heavenly

impulse can live. There may be the hindrance of some dearly-loved sin, the clinging-to of some desire which God through His revelation, or through our own consciences, has bidden us renounce. Alas, while these remain the good thoughts which are to fill and hold the places of the evil ones which we are trying to expel, can find no entrance. "The thoughts of the *righteous* are *right*," and it is only as we follow after righteousness that our thoughts can become pure and holy. If we are conscientiously endeavoring to open our hearts to divine influences, and still the thoughts of God do not flow readily at first, as indeed after long banishment they can not be expected to, let us turn to the right performance of *deeds* for God. If thoughts of kindness do not come at command to fill the place of hatred or uncharitableness, let us do deeds of kindness, and the thought will come unconsciously. We must often work up from deeds to words, and from words to thoughts, and having done this we find that the "rule works both ways," that the heart having been educated to right thoughts, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and \*

that the warmth of loving thoughts inspires us to all good deeds. Let us work, then, systematically, earnestly, conscientiously, trusting to God to change the meditations of our hearts so that they may be acceptable in His sight.

“Commit thy *works* unto the Lord, and thy *thoughts* shall be established.”

And lastly, a great help in the conquest of unruly thoughts is to assimilate the good thoughts of others: by reading, by hearing, and especially by being much with those whose thoughts are pure and true and earnest. The quiet influence of holy men, whose hearts are full of God, infuses a right element into our thoughts which silently works a “bloodless revolution.” Be much with the Saints of God, drawing from them the power of holy thought. But there is a higher, nobler companionship in whose close intimacy we can fill our soul with the all-conquering fullness of pure and heavenly meditation. If we would bring every thought captive to Christ we must become one with Him in warmest, tenderest union. We must assimilate His high and noble thoughts, becoming imbued with

His spirit, treasuring His words, studying His actions, drawing nearer to Him every day in deepest love and closest imitation, if we would at last be able to say, "we have the mind of Christ." Having done this, our thoughts will turn joyfully to their willing obedience, blessing the Conqueror whose captives they have become, and we shall sing in happy triumph, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me. Thy comforts shall delight my soul!"

"CHRISTIAN ! dost thou see them



On the holy ground,  
How the powers of darkness  
Rage thy steps around ?

Christian ! up and smite them,  
Counting gain but loss ;  
In the strength that cometh  
By the Holy Cross.

"Christian ! dost thou feel them,

How they work within,  
Striving, tempting, luring,  
Goading into sin ?

Christian ! never tremble,  
Never be down-cast ;  
Gird thee for the battle,  
Watch and pray and fast.



“ Christian ! dost thou hear them,  
How they speak thee fair?  
‘ Always fast and vigil?  
Always watch and prayer ’?  
Christian ! answer boldly ;  
‘ While I breathe I pray ! ’  
Peace shall follow battle,  
Night shall end in day.

“ ‘ Well I know thy trouble,  
O my servant true ;  
Thou art very weary,  
I was weary too ;  
But that toil shall make thee  
Some day all Mine own,  
And the end of sorrow  
Shall be near My throne.’ ”

ST. ANDREW OF CRETE.



## VI.

## THE SEARCHING OF GOD.

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart.”—Ps. cxxxix. 23.*

**I**S there not a comfort which we often miss in the thought that God *can* search us and know us, that the darkness can not hide our sin from Him, that He even “understandeth our *thoughts* afar off?” At first a reading of the 139th Psalm overwhelms our poor, weak, consciously sinful hearts with an almost oppressive sense of awe. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, and before the concluding prayer, “Search me, O God,” we stop doubting.

“Is there no baseness we would hide,  
No inner vileness that we dread?”

But in reality what comfort there is for us in this Omniscience of our Father!

We can not search and know ourselves.

Such knowledge is indeed too wonderful for us. Try as we may, and as many of us truly do (although it may only be spasmodically and with too soon wearied exertion), some sins will escape our scrutiny, and we may never be cognizant of them until the bright light of Christ's Day of Judgment pierces the shadows in which they have lain hidden, and draws our startled attention to them. But *God* knows them, and even although we be ignorant of them ourselves, if we earnestly pray to be led into the way everlasting, He can bring about a change the extent of which may be unknown to us, and some sin we may always have been unconscious of, may, indeed, through God's working within us, be conquered, and melt away, as an answer to our general prayer for holiness, even without special reference to that particular form of evil, and we ourselves may only know of its previous existence by the happier Christianity welling up within us after it is gone. Surely the thought is a comforting one, when, despairing of finding our hidden sins, knowing that much of evil will undoubtedly be overlooked in any self-searching, we can trust that

God knows each particular sin and shortcoming, and will provide a cure for it even without our knowledge, if our true and sincere desire is to be led in the way everlasting.

And then, again, what comfort there is in the knowledge that God's Omniscience does not depend upon anything in ourselves, that no choice has been left us in the matter! We would not be likely to say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart," if we had not first been filled with the awful and yet comforting consciousness expressed in the opening words of the Psalm: "O Lord, Thou *hast* searched me and known me!" If God our Father, and our dear Master, Christ, were all that they now are to us except Omniscient, would we not, from very love to them, hide some of our thoughts, although the hiding of them would be an intolerable burden to us?

There are thoughts which we can not confess to any one, not from fear, but partly from shame, and partly because the very naming of them would seem to give them more shape and substance than they had before. If we felt that our Master did not know them we would be apt to think it better to strive

against them silently, and not to give them form upon our lips. We would dread to mar our intercourse with Him by giving to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name," not because we do not love Him, or dread any punishment He might inflict, but because we could not bear to open out our evil thoughts before One whose "Well done" we are longing so to hear; and we would struggle on blindly, hoping to overcome by His general grace the faults which He should never know. And yet, what an unhappy life it would be! How often would we resolve to tell all, and then fall back helplessly with the cry, "I can not!" The great sins, the glaring faults, perhaps, would drive us to confession; but the little-nesses, the weaknesses, the impurities of spirit, which it would seem impossible to bring out in all their bareness to the light; how they would rankle and fester! Even if He should say in all tenderness, "Confess and be forgiven," we would draw back, and long to leave Him in His ignorance. But now, when each of us can say, "O Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee, as well as Thou knowest all the black crevices

of my heart, forgive me for what I can not even distinctly specify, although *I* know and *Thou* knowest, and cleanse Thou me, O Lord, from secret faults"; now indeed is the load lifted and the conscience cleansed, and the heart lightened; and, having once felt the blessing of God's searching light illuminating our dark places, we must feel humbled indeed at what He must have seen there; but the relief of knowing that our heavy secret is shared by One who sympathizes with us, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, will be so great that with perfect sincerity and earnest desire we shall pray daily, "Search me, O God!"

"**I** KNOW my sheep." If you would think rightly of the Son of Man, think of the Person who knows thoroughly everything that each one of you is feeling, and can not utter to others or himself—every temptation from riches, from poverty, from solitude, from society, from gifts of intellect, from want of them, from the gladness of the spirit, from the barrenness and dreariness of it, from the warmth of affection and from the drying up

of affection, from the anguish of doubt and the dullness of indifference, from the whirlwind of passion and the calm which succeeds it, from the vile thoughts which spring out of fleshly appetites and indulgences, from the darker, more terrible suggestions which are presented to the inner will. Believe that He knows all these, that He knows *you*. And then, believe this also, that all He knows is through intense, inmost sympathy—not with the evil that is assaulting you—but with you who are assaulted by it. Believe that knowledge, in this, the Scripture sense of it—the human as well as the divine sense of it—is absolutely inseparable from sympathy.

F. D. MAURICE.



HE whom no praise can reach, is aye  
Man's least attempts approving;  
Whom justice makes all-merciful,  
Omniscience makes all-loving.

How Thou canst think so well of us,  
And be the God Thou art,  
Is darkness to my intellect,  
But sunshine to my heart.


FABER.



## VII.

## THE MAJESTY OF GOD.

*"The Lord reigneth; He is clothed  
with majesty."*—PSALM xciii. 1.

S there not a tendency in our modern religion to neglect the thought of the Majesty of God? The reaction against the hollow forms of a debased ritual at the Reformation, filled the minds of men with the dread of beauty or ceremony in their worship. And the joy of once more receiving their Master into their hearts, not as a King to whom intercession must be made through innumerable indirect agencies, but as the loving and sympathizing Friend, the "man of sorrows, acquainted with grief," led them almost to forget the First Person of the Trinity in their love and devotion for the Second. This was but natural, and partially, at least, right; and we, too, all of us Christians, find such comfort in the close companionship of Jesus, in



His loving condescension, that I think we often miss out of our religion the grandeur and majesty which certainly form a large element of our Scriptures.

There is a chord in the human heart which can only be struck by the power of this very glory and grandeur. The note of *awe* is wanting in the harmony of worship without this awakening of the sense of majesty. How eagerly does humanity gape and stare at the spectacular surroundings of an earthly throne! How ready we are to throw ourselves upon the ground in very ecstasy of hero-worship; yes, even to cast ourselves under the wheels of any awe-inspiring Juggernaut! And this sentiment, even when purely of the earth, earthy, is an elevating one. The sound of the trumpet and the waving banner can inspire a martial valor, an enthusiasm of heroism, which, without these seemingly useless adjuncts, would be wanting in the bravest regiment.

And it is this natural desire of the human heart that God answers by the inspiration of such marvellous pageantry as that of St. John's Revelation, filling our souls with the beauty

of the golden throne and the echoes of the cathedral-like service of the white-robed angels. Take the book of Revelation, and read, with soul opened to receive the grand impression, the description of the throne in Heaven, with the rainbow round about it, "in sight like unto an emerald"; the four-and-twenty elders with their crowns of gold; the lightnings and thunderings and voices proceeding from the throne; the seven lamps burning before it; the sea of glass like unto crystal; the solemn chant of "Holy, holy, holy," from the four beasts, with its refrain from the prostrate elders, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power!" the harps and trumpets; the golden vials of incense; the voices of angels and beasts and elders, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," saying, "Worthy the Lamb"; and then the loud chorus taken up by "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea," saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and

ever!" Could anything fill with brighter pageantry, with more glorious music, with higher enthusiasms of awe-inspiring worship and adoration the soul of man? There are times when our religion needs just such an inspiration, when we can most truly say, "It is good for us to be here."

But such exaltation is *not* good for "human nature's daily food," unless there is added to it what in the Scriptures we always find finishing up and rounding off any rapt contemplation of heavenly glory.

God is clothed with majesty; but let us not admire the glorious "trappings and shows" of His power without remembering that, although His garments are Majesty, He Himself is Love! The centre of the worship, whose awful grandeur we have been thrilled with, is a Lamb. The Son of Man, standing amidst the golden candlesticks, His eyes like flame, His voice as the sound of many waters, His countenance as the sun shining in its strength, speaks, and His words are: "Fear not!" He that sitteth on the throne shall "dwell among" His children, and the tenderest of loving acts shall be gently performed

by the King whom we have seen in His beauty ; " He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Yes, surely the splendor of the Lord of hosts is an inspiring and ennobling element of the Divine Revelation ; but we must not dwell on it alone. There must be deep down in our souls the quiet love, the every-day peace which cannot be disturbed, the living image of the Son of Man, held with childlike trust and familiarity close to our heart of hearts.

The great poet of England, who understood with such wonderful penetration the thoughts and tendencies of humanity, makes the poor, dying courtier, who had been attendant upon a spendthrift prince, and had been stained and spotted in his rough contact with the world of dissipation and folly, when nearing his end, talk not of the many processions and pageants which he had witnessed, the army reviews with their shining armor and floating banners, the court with its gorgeous costumes and splendid ceremony, but says simply and touchingly, " He babbled of green fields."

And so it is with the Revelation of St. John. He has been describing the New Je-

rusalem in all the brilliancy of precious stones and gold and pearls. We can almost see the city more glorious than any air-castle of men, descending as with the glory of God out of the heavens. But this is not the picture which he leaves with us as we close the book. His cry of "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," is inspired by yet another vision. The last description with which he fills the soul of his readers is one of a pure river, clear as crystal, and of the tree of life with its gentle leaves of healing, and its monthly fruits of plenty; and, sweetest of all, the Lamb standing where we may "see His face."

The Lord, who is clothed in majesty, maketh us to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth us beside the still waters. And "His banner over us is Love."



Y God, how wonderful Thou art,  
Thy Majesty how bright,  
How beautiful thy mercy-seat,  
In depths of burning light !

How dread are Thine eternal years,  
O everlasting Lord !  
By prostrate spirits day and night  
Incessantly adored !

How beautiful, how beautiful  
The sight of Thee must be ;  
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,  
And awful purity !

Oh, how I fear Thee, living God !  
With deepest, tenderest fears ;  
And worship Thee with trembling hope,  
And penitential tears.


Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord !  
Almighty as Thou art ;  
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me  
The love of my poor heart.

FABER.

## VIII.

## THE PERSONAL RELATION OF GOD TO US.

*"The secret of the Lord is with them  
that fear Him."*—PSALM XXV. 14.

OD'S outward dealings with His creatures are one thing, His private understanding (if one may reverently call it such) with His nearest disciples is quite another. And those who are drawing nearer in humble love to their Master day by day, feel increasingly the opening out of this secret of His. It is as though the language, which at first seemed a foreign one to us, and which we only could understand in the simplest and most practical of commands, were becoming gradually clear and intelligible, as though we had heard, each for himself or herself, a whisper of that new name which is the personal and private bond between each individual and God.



Knowing that the "Our Father" is all-embracing in its breadth of application, there is still something which strongly appeals to a human craving for individuality in the thought that we each personally have a secret with our God; that He calls us by our own name, chosen by His loving thoughtfulness, and that each of us may cry not only "*Our Father*," but with all the strength of the possessive pronoun in the singular, "*My* Lord, and *My* God!"

This desire for a strong personal relation between each of us separately and our Lord, is, indeed, often the cause of a latent and suppressed dissatisfaction in our weak and jealous human hearts. We know that this love is personal and individual; we believe it in theory, and yet we can not help feeling lost in a vague generality when we read that He "loved the world," that we are *all* His children, that there seems to be no distinction made in His love or care. It is a selfish feeling, and one which we try to suppress, ashamed of its lightest whisper in our hearts; and yet who has not felt it? We seem to lose our very personality in the crowd, in the "great multi-


tudes ' ; our individuality becomes indistinct, and we long for some direct relation to our Lord, some feeling of peculiar nearness.

Sitting some time ago on the sea-shore watching the full harvest-moon rising in all its mellow glory over the restlessly tossing ocean, I noticed how direct was the golden path of the moonlight over the dark waters, straight from the horizon to my very feet. It seemed as though the track were made for me alone. Everywhere else the waves lay unilluminated to my eyes ; I could see no other moonlit path ; to me it seemed as though I alone were in direct and secret communication with the heavenly glory. And yet all the many groups scattered far and near along the cliffs could appropriate the moon-track as well and as truly as I. The moon lighted us all, but to each one of us individually there was a separate and direct avenue open, all our own, a secret path which no one else might know.

Is it not just so with God's relation to us ? He is like the beautiful moon shedding radiance on all the world, and yet, across the dark and troubled sea of life, there is a dis-

ting track of individual care and love for each separate child of His which it may claim as its very own.

God's love is as deep as it is broad. It is only after Christ has been dwelling in our hearts for a time that we begin dimly to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge

HUT thy door upon thee, and call unto Jesus, thy beloved.

Stay with Him in thy closet ; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else. . . . The inward man He often visiteth, and hath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful.—*Imitation of Christ.*




LITTLE heart of mine ! shall pain  
Or sorrow make thee moan,  
When all this God is all for thee,  
A Father all thine own ?

FABER.

## IX.

## WALKING, RUNNING, FLYING.

*"Do not I fill heaven and earth?  
saith the Lord."*—JER. xxiii. 24.

 HERE is a tendency in the human soul to think of God as filling heaven, but it is not so easy to remember that the earth also is filled with His glory; a tendency which leads us, like the Samaritans, to desire to worship God on the mountains, but to doubt that He can open "fountains in the midst of the valley," that no "depth" can separate us from His love.

Dr. Bushnell has a very suggestive sermon on the text, "When they stood they let down their wings"; the idea being that contact with material things, and dependence upon them, naturally causes a folding of one's spiritual pinions, a lowering of one's heavenly desires. Leaving his very beautiful interpretation of this thought, let us wander a little into a side

path, striking from the direction into which his train of argument would lead us.

There is a feeling of much sadness, and often of great discouragement, in the remembrance of how much more we use our feet than our wings, and how often when the wings seem to be doing their best, and one is really beginning to soar, the attraction of gravitation is suddenly felt with overwhelming force, and, becoming too strong for us, draws our feet resistlessly down, not only to walk on the ground, but even to sink in the mire !

As Miss Greenwell says in her "Patience of Hope," "There is a sadness in all Idealism; it lifts the soul into a region where it cannot now dwell; it must return to the earth, and it is hard for it not to do so at the shock of a keen revulsion, the dashing of the foot against a stone."

But then, again, looking at the subject in a little different light, we must remember that, as mortals and not angels yet, our feet are very necessary and not to be neglected with impunity. Let us look for a time upon our wings as typifying our spiritual aspirations,

longings, ecstasies, and our feet as being the daily and prosaic round of duties, our point of contact with humanity, even our lower and more systematic religious devotions and tasks. Viewed in this light, our feet must be taken as good care of as our wings. One is so apt to rush from one extreme to the other, and either to forget all about one's wings, or else to strain them into a too constant use, forgetting altogether to rest, as even the lightest, swiftest-flying bird must needs do at times, upon the solid earth. But even as "the eye can not say to the hand, I have no need of thee," so can not the wings say to the feet, "We have no need of you!" If one does not exercise oneself in the plain walking of every-day life, the very flights of the soul will grow weak, and even the spirit in man will wish at last, like Noah's dove, to find "rest for the sole of its feet."

In plain language, even aspiration and religious ecstasy will grow first vague, and then cold, if there is no solid ground for *duty* to walk on between times. But this is only taught by experience. When one first becomes able to use one's wings it seems as



though walking were no better than imprisonment. If we have been particularly thrilled with a sense of God's beauty; if our love for Jesus has been warmer, and our feeling of nearness to Him more vivid than usual, we are almost sure to feel a sort of repugnance to any fixed *rule* of reading, or praying, or doing any duty; an aversion to bringing down our thoughts from a vast contemplation of heavenly things, a rhapsody of love and worship, to a stricter attention to the detail of service. It is as though one rejoiced in the blaze of the fire, but rebelled against the prosaic work of gathering fuel for its continuance. But the very truest of truths was spoken by à Kempis long ago when he said: "Yet the light omission of spiritual exercises seldom passes without loss to our souls."

The Christian life on earth is a good deal like the training of an artist for his work. First there is the artistic impulse, the feeling of being called to his vocation, and the willingness to sacrifice himself to its toil in order to reap its reward. But the initiatory steps are hard and seemingly inartistic. There is the slow endeavor to make a straight line, or



to form correctly an arm or hand, some single uninteresting detail of feature. That is like the first doing of the Will after having been roused to accept with love the vocation of a Christian life, the striving after righteousness in the first slow steps of Christian progress. Then suddenly comes the inspiration for the whole, the blocking in, in grand effective outlines, which fills the artist with ardor and admiration; the sketching of beautiful conceptions, which, in the rapid development of his idea, seems to be at first the one thing needful to the eager scholar; and, enraptured with his progress, he forgets that, after all, it is but *outline*. This is also like the second stage in the Christian life. The sudden bursting upon one of the beauty and grandeur of God, and of the life in Him; the spreading of one's wings for the first time, and soaring to where one breathes in the first full breath of Heaven. One feels as though nothing could be needed more; as though the rest of one's life must be one long act of adoration, as though the soul could enjoy itself forever in the sketchy vagueness of the heavenward-stretching outline.

But Christian and artist must both come back to the point from which they started, only that now the glorious outline remaining with them vivifies the labor of going over the detail, and of filling in with all the careful lights and shades. For the outline must be rounded with numberless little lines of shade, and spots of light, the features must be brought out in their minutest details, and although the breadth of outline is retained, and the grand conception warms the heart, yet even these must be for the time kept in the background, while the exactest working in of minutiae is necessary for the very perfection and life of the whole. We must come back from our happy bird's-eye views of life in our Master, to fill it all in with minute labors of love for Him. After an hour of "familiarity exceeding wonderful," we must put even our own personal intercourse with Him aside in order to do some service for Him, whether it be a kindness to others, a regular reading or study, or a fighting of some bad habit, or known fault. And the smaller the matter, the more distasteful will it be, and just in consequence the more necessary. All

the weary details of common life go to the filling in of our outline, the copying stroke for stroke of our great Pattern, so that when He shall appear we may be like Him! Do not weary of your work, for "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as the eagle; shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."



FATHER, I know that all my life  
Is portioned out for me;  
And the changes that are sure to come  
I do not fear to see;  
But I ask Thee for a present mind  
Intent on pleasing Thee. . . .

I ask Thee for the daily strength  
To none that ask denied,  
And a mind to blend with outward life,  
While keeping at Thy side;  
Content to fill a little space,  
If Thou be glorified. . . .

In a service which Thy will appoints  
There are no bonds for me;  
For my inmost heart is taught the Truth  
That makes Thy children free;  
And a life of self-renouncing love  
Is a life of liberty.

ANNA WARING.

## X.

## ENTHUSIASM.

*"But it is good to be zealously affected."*—GAL. iv. 18.

**H**AVING meditated upon the necessity of exercising ourselves systematically and constantly in the prosaic round of daily duties, let us now consider more in detail the pendant truth which we have already referred to, and which alone can keep the Christian life rightly balanced—the necessity of encouraging the flights of our religious enthusiasm. The impulse to enthusiasm is very strong in many natures, and no one is utterly without seasons of excitement, when the mind and soul are at tension, when the heart expands, when one seems to have reached some mountain-height from which one has

an overpowering longing to soar into the encompassing blue.

But the question comes to us again and again, "Is it well to indulge these moments of ecstasy?" The tendency of us all is to be ashamed of our hours of heart-stirring emotion after they are over; we are filled with shame-facedness at having betrayed ourselves, at having shown our inner vitality, if only to our own consciousness. The actual life seems too dull and prosaic to be a good nourisher of poetical aspirations, and we sink to its level with a reaction whose hopeless sense of dull and commonplace reality is so hard to bear that we wearily sigh—"It were better never to have known anything different, the return had been less bitter and unnerving!"

After reading the inspiring thoughts of some strong and hopeful writer, and being filled with the sense of the possible nobility of man, the grandeur capable of being brought out of us, the great aim of some inspiring work urged on by heroic aspirations, we feel for the moment infected by the noble impulse of his words; we feel that we, too, might be *heroes*. But the reaction comes, the strong tension is

relaxed, our common-sense looks scornfully at our blushing and shrinking enthusiasm; we begin to think it high-strung and impracticable, and turn our backs to its light with a shrug and shake of the head, half-sad, half-disdainful, murmuring: "That was fine writing, but it don't mean anything!"

And so with our religion. An eloquent and earnest sermon will stir our torpid souls into eager excitement; we hear the noble music of the "Messiah," and as we rise to our feet at the "Hallelujah Chorus," we are thrilled through and through with intense homage and adoration; we read some word of the Master which happens to come home to our hearts with some new meaning, and everything is suffused with a heavenly splendor; we seem to walk on air, and to be lifted above all earthly considerations. But oh, how infinitely sad is the inevitable descent! An hour or two after such divine communion, after having seen Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending, we feel, not as Jacob did in his childlike trust, that it was a vision from God to us, but that we have been dreaming; that our



imaginations had run away with us, and that we have been sadly, pitiably out of the reality. Often all that is left to us after such a period of enthusiasm is a vague and general belief in a God who seems out of sight, out of hearing, and whom we can only *say* we love without having the words come from deeper than our lips! We try to stir our feelings into life, but they seem to have been all evaporated in the late climax, and we can only wait, like the impotent man, for another moving of the waters.

It is the utter sadness and desolation of these reactions which makes us doubt the wisdom of ever leaving the "even tenor" of our ways; and we bitterly resolve never to mount to any pinnacle, for fear that in our necessary descent we should dash our foot against a stone!

And yet it is "good to be zealously affected." Enthusiasts have done all the great work of the world. It is the very fanatics of a cause who infuse the necessary energy into its development. It was a noble enthusiasm which caused the poor fishermen, busy with their nets, to cast them aside, and "straightway



follow the Master." Surely their hearts must have been filled with an emotion quite other than the plodding common-sense of every-day life to induce them to leave all and follow Him! If there had been no enthusiasm, no visions of an expanded imagination yearning toward heavenly things, no impulse of self-forgetful, impetuous devotion to an ideal of life beyond the seen realities; if there had been none of these in the world at the time of our Saviour's Incarnation, He had had no followers, no sympathizers in His work, no friends.

And surely it was the highest, holiest of all enthusiasms which armed our Master for His painful life on earth. It was the "joy" which, through all His trials and sorrows, He kept within His heart, and which is but another name for an inspired impulse of enthusiasm, that kept Him from fainting; it was the "joy" set before Him which enabled Him to endure the cross. And what but a divine enthusiasm could have kindled His eye and strengthened His arm when He cast out the money-changers from the temple, so that the disciples remembered the words of the Psalm:


"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"?

Yes, a right enthusiasm is a potent help to the Christian life. It carries along others in its forward rush, and gets work done for God which otherwise would remain undone. "Nothing is so catching as enthusiasm."

Let us nourish and foster it ; let us not clip the wings of our souls when we feel them beating with desire to seek the sky ; let us not even be frightened at the thought of the relapse. There may be, nay, there *must* be hours of sadness and discouragement. These, too, are sent in God's wisdom for our training and discipline. But He has given us a way of escape, even in these times of despondency, through which we can reach the freedom of the open air, seeing the clear sky above us, even if we can not soar into its depths of blue, and feeling the soft breath of freshening breezes, although we may not be wafted upon them above the earth. And the way of escape is this: *Find something to do, and do it with your might.* Enthusiasm, to be ennobling, to leave us better and purer and holier, must be worked off, and not allowed to die out in in-

action. The disciples did not leave their nets to sit and dream, but to become "fishers of men." The zeal of Jesus Christ inspired a life which was the busiest, the most unwearied, the most energetic ever lived. He did not dream; He "went about doing good."

This is the secret of a right and holy enthusiasm. Steam will burst the boiler if it is repressed; it must find a way of escape by being the motive power which brings wonders to pass, and does the work of a world. Work done for God, trusting in Him, moved by the impulse of a great enthusiasm for Him, drawing strength for our service in the higher moments of our worship, this it is which will make the balance hang evenly, and give a just equilibrium to our religion. There need be no fear then of dashing our feet against the stones, no matter how high the pinnacle of our devotion. "For He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands." "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name."

OW much there is to remind the believer of what the two chosen disciples must have felt when they descended from the Mount

of Transfiguration. For he, too, has known moments, perhaps hours, on which the calm of eternity seemed already to rest,—still, blessed seasons in which he has beheld, not only Moses and Elias, but his own life also, transfigured in his beloved Lord; times in which things present were intelligible, things distant clear. And he, too, has come down, like them, to meet the full shock of this life's perplexity, to be met by human anguish, the struggles of the demoniac. . . . In Christ, as well as for Christ, they are to be counted happy who endure; who bear all things, silence, delay, aridity, for thus He trains His athletes."

*Patience of Hope*, DORA GREENWELL.

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ARTHLY desire, confused unrest and longing,  
 All sad, dumb yearning for some vague Ideal,  
 Mad hopes and wishes, which at times come  
 thronging

Into the heart, to undermine the Real—

How shall we fight with their insidious sadness,  
 Whose blighting forces every hour increase,  
 Or free our souls from the fast-growing madness  
 Of earthly longings which can find no peace?

Like some great, devastating, turbid river,  
 The current of desire rushes down,  
 Increasing, widening, hurrying onward ever  
 Until all happy duty is o'erthrown.

Alas ! Humanity must needs be yearning ;  
Earth's hard realities oppress the soul ;  
No saint or stoic learns to still the burning  
Of fevered longings pressing toward a goal.

And if this goal be earthly good or pleasure,  
Then truly is desire an evil thing,  
Wasting its throbbing strength to chase a treasure  
Which evermore escapes on mocking wing.

But longing may be holy, turned toward heaven,  
And Duty's path may be by yearning trod ;  
Joy may to dull realities be given,  
Choosing the true Ideal—which is God !

E. R. C.

## XI.

## DRYNESS OF SOUL.

*"But now our soul is dried away."*

—NUM. xi. 6.



HERE are some similes which, with the inherent love of metaphor and symbol of an Eastern people, occur again and again throughout our Scriptures. Spiritualizing the old pagan worship of light, we have seen how constantly the fulness of life, the life in God and Christ, is typified by the Sun, the morning light, the glory of a cloudless day. Again, with all the depth of tenderness, does the Lord ring the changes through book after book of the Bible, on that touching symbol of His guiding love, the Eastern shepherd. The representing of God and His people as Shepherd and sheep is repeated over and over again, the loved and chosen type employed by prophet after



prophet, by Christ Himself, by the Apostles after Him.

Another simile in constant use by the inspired writers, reappearing time and again through all the varied phases of the life of the children of Israel, and later of the Christian Church, is the one which we now desire to meditate upon—moisture and drought, as expressing in eloquent metaphor the fresh healthfulness, or sickly sterility of the Christian life. The simile has so taken possession of our minds, that “dryness of religious feeling” seems no longer a poetical expression, but a prosaic statement of a sad, yet frequently recurring phase of human weakness. Who has not known the grievous experience of trying to draw refreshment from one’s springs of emotion and finding them dried up; of endeavoring to cultivate some flower of grace, and being frustrated in one’s efforts by the hardness of the parched ground, upon which no living plant can be seen? We may have been rejoicing in the “early dew” of our goodness, the earth has seemed soft and receptive, the young and tender shoots of our soul have been glistening with a healthful,

moisture, and to be laborers in the vineyard of God has seemed an easy and refreshing task. But alas! the long, hot, trying day has succeeded the cool softness of the morning air, and we see our flowers fade, the ground of our hearts turn dry and parched and unproductive, and the stillness and torpidity of death creep over all our warm emotions, our bright hopes, our eager resolves. "Your goodness is as a morning-cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

These seasons of religious drought differ from either doubt or depression; instead of the murky atmosphere and dark over-clouding of depression, or the rough blasts and heavy thunderings of the soul tempest-tossed by doubt, there is the dead, emotionless sterility, the incapacity of emotion, the parched torpor of a joyless and feelingless dryness. Whence does this drought come, and how may we water the dry ground of our souls from which every bud of hope, every freshly-opened blossom of enthusiasm, every perfect flower of love seems to have shriveled away?

Very often this state of dryness is caused by

neglect. A careless disuse of the means which have been given us of keeping fresh and active the emotions of our religious life; the omission of constant prayer, the neglect of our devotional reading, the cutting ourselves off from the "refreshing" which "shall come from the presence of the Lord"; ah, how often we thoughtlessly leave our souls to grow hard, and dry, and parched from such causes! We live on, careless of the daily change within us, imagining ourselves to be doing well, never doubting that the Lord we profess to follow is watering our soul-gardens with His grace, needing no help of ours; and suddenly, when we have a desire to be comforted with the life and freshness of the emotions and aspirations which before have cheered us with their fragrance, we turn to our souls and find them withered! Without our help even God can not prevent our souls from becoming "a land of great drought."

Sometimes the hardness and indifference of heart, the lack of all impulse and emotion comes to us as a punishment for enthusiasm which has died out without fruit. As we noticed before, enthusiasm to be beneficial

must be worked off, it must be productive of some good result. If allowed to die out, it is sure to leave a void which induces the very emptiness and torpidity of religious feeling which we are considering. It was because the fig-tree bore no fruit that it withered away.

It is the chastening hand of the Lord which is laid upon us at these times, and having brought ourselves into a condition when the displeasure of God is shown by making our "springs dry," we must remember that He chasteneth whom He loveth, and that the dryness of our souls has been sent as an enemy to conquer, to the trying of our force, the proving of our armor, and that if we rouse ourselves to resistance, the trial will appear as a blessing when we have "overcome." The torpor which steals over us, the drowsiness as of the man buried in a snow-drift without the energy to do battle to the insidious cold which penetrates his being, this is the hardest foe to fight, and one to whose overcoming we must awaken every resource. There is no enthusiasm to give us courage, no warmth of impulse to carry us resistlessly forward. It is the slow and difficult task of pumping water into our

dry wells, of diligent digging and watering. There are times when the Christian life seems to resolve itself into a "patient waiting for Christ," a "patient continuance in well-doing," and then it is hard not to succumb to the stealthy, undermining influence of indifference and coldness. Christ's words, "But me ye have not always with you," may be taken in a spiritual as well as a literal sense, and it is when entering into one of these states of separation from the conscious presence of our Master that we must pay strictest heed to His command, "Watch and pray." A perfect Christian character should never be separated from the vivid realization of the nearness of Jesus, but in this incomplete and imperfect human life of ours, we must all needs feel the dryness of the seasons when our sins have hid His face from us. Even saintly old Thomas à Kempis must have been distressed with such periods of trial, for over and over again he reverts to them, trying in his sadness to see the reason for them, and drawing lessons of warning, and advancement, and even comfort from the drought which God had sent upon his soul. "Thinkest thou that thou

shalt always have spiritual consolations at thine own will? My saints had not always such, but they had many afflictions and sundry temptations, and feelings of great desolateness." "Nor is it in this only that thy progress in spiritual life consists, when thou hast the grace of comfort; but rather when with humility, self-denial, and patience, thou endurest the withdrawing thereof; provided thou do not then become listless in the exercise of prayer, nor suffer the rest of thy accustomed duties to be at all neglected. Rather do thou cheerfully perform what lieth in thee, according to the best of thy power and understanding; and do not wholly neglect thyself because of the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest." "Stir up my heart toward Thee, and set me free from heavy listlessness!"

When we have fallen into one of these periods of "heavy listlessness," how may we arouse ourselves, how moisten the dry ground of our hearts?

One of the difficulties which meet us in any attempts to a more lively interest in spiritual things at such a time is the utter incapacity



of realization. Our creed seems a dream, the great objects of our love and desire melt away into vague shadows; there is nothing vivid, nothing tangible in our faith. God is to us a name; we are conscious of having felt a loyal and enthusiastic worship for Him in the past, but now we can only say that we *have* worshipped, and that we know we were right in so doing, but "our souls are dried away," we feel no life, no stirring of the emotions at the Name which has often held such divine comfort and inspiration for us. We look within and wonder if "this cold clay clod was man's heart." We think of our Jesus, whom we have loved with such deep and tender devotion, and we find our conception of Him blurred, our realization of Him faint and passing away. Was it a Dream that we loved? Have we been worshipping an Ideal? So it seems to us, and no call upon our hearts is able to arouse a sense of reality within them. This difficulty of realization is often greatly helped by changing one's position, and looking at some other part of the great truths of our religion. If our eyes are strained steadily upon any one spot, it will grow more and

more vague and blurred. The outline will become indistinct, the form will fade away until there is nothing left before our aching eyes but shadows. If we repeat one word over and over again, we will find that it gradually loses all meaning, till at last we wonder what strange jumble of letters we are muttering. And so it may be with our religion. We may dwell upon a certain side of truth, we may ponder upon one of the many elements of the character of Jesus Christ, we may study one phase of His life until the reality seems to die out of it. For the time we have exhausted our power of thought on this part of God's revelation, and if we try to force our mind to work on in the same track the outline grows blurred, we lose our hold on it, and reality becomes a dream. If, then, we feel the numbness of this want of realization stealing upon us, if we have studied the death of Jesus until we feel that our hearts are becoming callous to His sufferings, let us for the moment shut off from our minds this blessed portion of His work for us, and turn our thoughts upon His life; or, if we have grown accustomed to call Him by any one of His

many names until the word grows to lose its meaning and does not convey the fulness of its significance, let us set it aside for a while and call Him in our hearts by another. Let us ring the changes upon the dear and well-known scenes of His earthly life, upon the tender, significant names which He has given us by which to call Him, upon the many perfect attributes of His divine and human character. We will often find this simple remedy sufficient to bring out in fresh life and vivid colors the seemingly dead vegetation of our soul-gardens.

Another difficulty in our seasons of drought, is the seeming impossibility of meditation. We can force ourselves to read, or to work, but to think or pray is intensely difficult. Our thoughts wander, we can not stir them into action, and if we conscientiously set ourselves the duty of locking our doors and trying for a fixed time to meditate upon spiritual things, the result is a disastrous defeat, and we seem more dry and lifeless after it is over than before. And yet surely meditation is right and necessary in the Christian life! Certainly it is; but one does not give the same dose even

of healthful tonic to the enfeebled and delicate invalid as to the stronger convalescent. Meditation and private devotion must be regulated by the state of the soul. All vain efforts to pump water out of exhausted springs are only hurtful. What emotion there is must be tenderly and carefully nursed; but to sit in dutiful abstraction for half an hour when the soul is too weak to exert itself for more than five minutes in the exercise of meditation is a serious mistake.

What is needed at such times is the gathering of whatever small resources of devotion the soul may yet hide within it, and the pouring forth in one concentrated effort of the few drops of religious feeling and true worship which we can command. A concentration of thought, be it only for five minutes, a real prayer—be it no longer than the full and realized exclamation “Our Father!”—these are worth hours of wandering, unfruitful attempts at meditation, or many long and rounded sentences of an unfelt and unnaturally forced prayer. Begin, then, when the soul is dried away, with a short concentrated effort; say, if you can even feel this much,

“Lord Jesus, I thirst”; and the promise will gradually be fulfilled, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”

Another help in times of dryness is the effort, by God's help, to *do* right; to keep ourselves true and our lives pure, no matter how joyless our religion may be. This will not miss its reward, but we will little by little find the comfort of “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” Again, that remedy in so many of the difficulties and temptations of our Christian life, *work for others*, will help bring down the wished-for rain upon our parched hearts. “He that watereth shall also be watered himself.” The earnest effort to benefit the souls of our neighbors will result surely, and by God's promise, in good to ourselves. Let us not infect others with our dryness, but in sympathetic, self-sacrificing help to them we shall find that not only their cisterns but our own shall be filled with water!

Let us not despair, then, when we find our springs begin to run dry, but let us still less sit with idly-folded hands and allow the

drought to spread. For, if we neglect the hints which our consciences give us of the necessity of a diligent watering of our souls, we will find that even these faithful servants will cease to perform their duty; a deadly numbness will creep upon us; the parched ground will no longer *thirst*, but will lie in lifeless sterility; and we will not even *care* to renew the freshness of our emotions, or the vanished bloom of our former hopes and aspirations.

God may even at such a crisis as this send the dark clouds of sorrow to pour their heavy floods upon our souls, and by storm and tempest to re-awaken us; but shall we wait for such a deliverance? Shall we not rather with *joy* draw waters out of the wells of salvation? If we labor earnestly and faithfully to keep our lives fresh and blooming by patient continuance in well-doing; if we nurse and cherish in our hearts with fervent love the "tender plant," the "root out of the dry ground," which is entrusted to the fond keeping of each one of us, then shall we receive the promise: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not."





H, for the happy days gone by,  
 When love ran smooth and free;  
 Days when my spirit so enjoyed  
 More than earth's liberty !

Oh for the times when on my heart  
 Long prayer had never palled,  
 Times when the ready thought of God  
 Would come when it was called !

Then when I knelt to meditate,  
 Sweet thoughts came o'er my soul;  
 Countless and bright and beautiful,  
 Beyond my own control.

What can have locked these fountains up?  
 Those visions what hath stayed?  
 What sudden act hath thus transformed  
 My sunshine into shade?

This freezing heart, O Lord, this well  
 Dry as the desert sand;  
 Good thoughts that will not come, bad thoughts  
 That come without command,—

A faith that seems not faith, a hope  
 That cares not for its aim;  
 A love that none the hotter grows  
 At Thy most blessed Name. . . . .

If this dear change be Thine, O Lord !  
If it be Thy sweet will,  
Spare not, but to the very brim  
The bitter chalice fill.

But if it hath been sin of mine,  
Then show that sin to me ;  
Not to get back the sweetness lost,  
But to make peace with Thee. . . . .

I know well how my heart hath earned  
A chastisement like this,  
In trifling many a grace away  
In self-complacent bliss. . . . .

If I have served Thee, Lord, for hire,  
Hire which Thy beauty showed,  
Can I not serve Thee now for nought,  
And only as my God? FABER.

## XII.

## DOUBT.

*"Lord, I believe: help Thou mine  
unbelief."*—MARK ix. 24.



THE darkness of doubt may hang heavily upon a heart even when it can honestly cry, "Lord, I believe!" For there are three very different kinds of doubt. There is the coldly criticising doubt of the intellect, proud of its superiority over the heart; the doubt which stands independent and self-sustaining, and with malicious triumph wearies the struggling Christian with the mocking cry, "Where is now thy God?" And very unlike this unbelief, in every feature, there is the "honest doubt" of the seeker after righteousness, which, in its anxious questionings and restless searchings, shows the true ring of an awakened conscience, better,

even in its ignorance and error, than the indolent ease of a fruitless and lifeless assent to what should be soul-stirring truths. But lastly, and this is the phase of doubt with which we would now busy ourselves, there is the doubt, disquieting, unnerving, of the believer, who, from some of the many causes always astir in this world of temptation, is rudely shaken by the shock of storming skepticism, or feels with horror the slow but steady undermining of faithless suggestions, insinuating themselves into his formerly quiet soul.

There are times when great waves of doubt come rolling over the Christian, engulfing him in the darkness as of death; times when one's creed shrinks to infinitesimal proportions; times when the struggle with the powers of darkness is so intense that the very foundations of one's life and hope seem to totter, and in utter exhaustion one almost feels the burden of a day:

“Où l'on voudrait nier pour cesser de douter.”

*Almost*, but not quite, for one who has ever felt the joy of believing will not be willing, even in the blackest doubt, to give up what

little hold he may have left upon his belief, vague and shaken though it be.

In order to help ourselves if such seasons of distress should come upon us, let us consider some of the causes of, and some of the remedies for, Christian doubt.

First, doubt is, I think, often aroused and fostered by the disagreement in opinion of the various sects and classes of believers. We are startled by the bitterness of controversy, we see that one man's trust and hope is thought heresy and perdition by his neighbor, and we exclaim in sad astonishment, "What is truth?" The evil spirit whispers in our ear, "What if they are all wrong together? What if they are all building air castles, none of whose foundations rest on anything more solid than clouds? Vanity of vanities, all, even this is vanity!"

If one dwells much upon these differences, if one tries to explain to oneself the points of opposition, or to follow the hot arguments of the theologians, the temptation to doubt and despondency will grow stronger with every new effort; do not try it—the danger is great. There is a "better way"—better than the "best

gifts" of controversialists—it is charity. Try to find not the differences, but the points of contact, the common hopes and affections, the deepest foundations of all believers upon a common rock. There are pass-words which will let us into every camp. There is at least one talisman which will open any Christian door to us. Let us forget the differences of uniform, and the various methods of discipline or drill employed by the lower officers, and join in admiration of, and enthusiasm for, our common Captain. If we follow this course, the doubts will be lightened.

Secondly, doubts are often caused by having put ourselves, often very unintentionally, under wrong influence. Thoughtless contact with the intellectual unbeliever, or with the careless worldling, can not fail to untune us. We see the good in them, and do not see that with their good we imbibe their evil. Let us be careful of this insidious influence, not by averting our faces from our fellow-men who have not the "like precious faith" that we have, but by bringing with us, in any intercourse with them, in our hearts, if, (as very often would be unwise,) not upon our lips, the



conscious presence of God, thus giving our side the majority, and filling us with the "courage of faith" which can cry, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

For, thirdly, any withdrawal from the Source of our faith, any unconscious widening of distance between the soul and God is one of the subtlest and most powerful causes of unbelief. The child can not walk alone without falling into the many snares and pitfalls which abound upon the road. Let us not let go of the Hand which alone can sustain us.

And lastly, much bitter doubting, many severe and unnecessary struggles, are the result of striving to grasp with the reason what can only be held by faith. Faith is the intellect of the heart, it is an understanding of a higher order than the understanding of the brain, it is a knowledge which can grasp what "passeth understanding." It is no unreality, no vague aspiration, but the "substance of things not seen." It is, as has been wisely said, "not an outgrowth of the mind opposed to its rational convictions, its clear and intimate intuitions. It is reason enlightened by its Lord and Giver, it is feeling reconciled

with its great Object; it is in an emphatic sense the right opinion of that which is." By keeping the heart, the spirit within man, alive and well-exercised, much needless clouding of the heavens above us is obviated.

Curiosity, trying to fathom with the human intellect the "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord our God," forgetting to wait patiently for the time of complete revelation, discontent with knowing "in part," leads into much error.

Having noticed some of the causes of Christian wavering and doubt, let us try to discover some of the remedies which may be used if the preventives which have been mentioned have been neglected and the soul has sunk into uncertainty. And first, vigorous occupation for God, service done to Him through our fellows, bringing the soul and body into healthy active ministration of good, doing the Will as far as we see it (and, be sure, we will find enough to do if we earnestly try),—this is a grand remedy, and likely to bring the freshness of our old faith back to us almost unconsciously. Leave your doubts alone, and exercise your heart and hands, rather than

your brain for a while. Shut and lock the door upon your questionings and misgivings, leaving them to the unseen influence of your active life of doing good. As Bushnell says, "Never be in a hurry to believe, never try to conquer doubts against time. If you can not open a doubt to-day, keep it till to-morrow; do not be afraid to keep it whole years."

Secondly, there should be no arguing about our doubts. Let us not be drawn into "vain disputations"—doubts often find no more excellent hot-house in which to blossom than the close and heated air of metaphysical debate. To quote again, this time from Carlyle, "If, even on common things, we require that a man keep his doubts silent, and not babble of them till they in some measure become affirmations or denials; how much more in regard to the highest things, impossible to speak of in words at all!" There are, naturally, questions which an ignorant and doubting soul may rightly long to ask, advice which some one higher in the Christian life may give for comfort and encouragement; but there are intricacies of subtle thought, curious questionings, debated

upon for the sake of argument; there is a bringing to the light of vain imaginings, the speaking of which can do us no good, and may to our eternal shame infect others with the same sore malady. Let us avoid these.

Thirdly, with the growth of our knowledge, with the enlargement of our faculties of human reasoning and science, we should increase in like degree and to an equal extent our powers of soul, our reverent worship of the Unseen.

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell,  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before.”

Fourthly, we can fall back, no matter how low and imperfect our creed may have become, upon the eternal rightness of things, the justice of God's overruling Providence, whatever may be its secret and inscrutable workings. At the worst and lowest ebb, let us try to cry with blind trustfulness, “ Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him ! ”

God's justice is a bed where we  
Our anxious hearts may lay,

And, weary with ourselves, may sleep  
Our discontent away.

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” And this brings us to the last and greatest remedy, the one which will conquer if all others fail — *love*, the charity which “believeth all things.” No questions of doubt in non-essentials, no uncertainties of thought concerning the minor truths of religion can harm effectively if love remains, if the heart is warm with devotion to Jesus Christ, the likeness of the unseen God. “Rooted and grounded in love,” our Christianity will stand firm, however much the topmost leaves and twigs may sway, tossed with tempest or swayed with disturbing winds of doctrine.

There may be clouds upon our horizon, some mountain-tops may be hidden from our eyes in enshrouding mists, but let us not be anxious lest the light should fade from our day, or strive, with the flickering candle of human knowledge, to explore the dark ravines

of the mountain-side which lie far apart from our necessary way, while yet the glorious Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the World, is shining in all His strength right upon our path, and while we can raise our eyes almost blinded with excess of light to where He shines in the zenith of our heavens!

Let us wait patiently for His warming and brightening influence, and at last not only our immediate path, but all the by-ways in which doubt once wandered forlorn, will be illuminated by His sunshine. But we must be sure that our sight of *Him* is not obscured. We must open our hearts to His warmth and radiance; we must cling to the love of Jesus Christ as the one thing needful, without which, indeed, the world would be utter darkness.

Stimulate your love of Him; watch its signs and tokens in your heart, and if you find it growing cold, if you find that doubt is weakening your hold on Him, take the holy Book which tells of Him, and read, without stopping to question any of the "hard sayings," or difficult meanings, but as a child would read a book in which it thoroughly be-



lieves, and let your heart get warmed and quickened by the glow of that holy life and self-sacrificing death; fill your soul with the thought of how He loved and suffered, and you will find that you can not close the Bible without, at least, having rekindled a *small* flame of love in your own heart. Try to think much of Him, to feel Him as a live and present Master, and be willing to set aside doubting with the quiet contentment which can say :

“I can not *understand*, I *love*.”

“For now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known. And now abide faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.’

#### TRUST.

**T**HE same old baffling questions ! O my friend,  
I can not answer them. In vain I send  
My soul into the dark, where never burn  
The lamps of science, nor the natural light  
Of Reason’s suns and stars ! I can not learn  
Their great and solemn meanings, nor discern  
The awful secrets of the eyes which turn

Evermore on us through the day and night  
With silent challenge and a dumb demand,  
Proffering the riddles of the dread unknown,  
Like the calm Sphinxes, with their eyes of stone,  
Questioning the centuries from their veils of sand !  
I have no answer for myself or thee,  
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee ;  
"All is of God that is, and is to be ;  
And God is good." Let this suffice us still,  
Resting in childlike trust upon His will,  
Who moves to His great end unthwarted by the ill.

WHITTIER.




NOTHING but the liberty of *believing much* will  
save us from believing *nothing*. BUSHNELL.

## XIII.

## DESPONDENCY.

*"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"—Ps. xlii. 5.*

 HERE is no more prevailing evil in the daily lives of nine-tenths of the men and women of the present time than the vague, undefined, insidious despondency which is known by the indefinite expression of "the blues." We are all attacked by this strange, often inexplicable depression, which seems to arise without cause, and in a moment hangs a heavy cloud before our eyes, turning our day to darkness, and plunging us into a heavy listlessness of sorrow from which it seems impossible to rally. Often there is no apparent reason for this overclouding of our souls; when questioned we can give no excuse; but it is there, lying

heavy upon us, and the fact that there is no reasonable cause makes it all the harder to bear. Everything looks black and gloomy; our lives seem intolerable; even our religion gives no hope or light, and we feel as though any past "joy in believing" were a dream from which we have awakened to meet a crushing reality of sadness. Sometimes this despondency is simply the result of physical causes.

"Tears, tears! *Why* do we weep?  
'Tis worth inquiry! that we've shamed 'a life,  
Or lost a love, or missed a world perhaps?  
By no means. Simply that we've walked too far,  
Or talked too much, or felt the wind i' the east;  
And so we weep, as if both body and soul  
Broke up in water."

If this is the case, there is, naturally, nothing to do but wait patiently for our fatigue to pass away, and for nature to right itself. But there are other springs from which despondency may flow, of graver import, and to be watched with careful eye if we would stop the flood of melancholy which, if allowed to stream in upon our souls unchecked, will undermine our strength of spirit, swamp our

good resolves, and eventually choke and drown our very religion. I think we will find on close examination that there are causes, hidden, and often unguessed, which are sure to bring about the sad results of depression and gloom, and which, with faithful and patient striving, trusting to God's aid in our endeavors, we may successfully and, in the end, entirely bring under control.

And first, much trouble is caused, much dissatisfaction aroused by an over-estimate of oneself. We are often unconscious of how high a price we put upon ourselves. We foster and indulge ourselves in the idea that we are unappreciated, that there is much good in us which others take no note of; that we deserve more than we get. Alas, there was great need for St. Paul's exhortation to "every man," "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." We measure ourselves by the lowest standards around us, and think we are better than others. We judge others by their actions, ourselves by the occasional good impulses and aspirations of our souls, never remembering that our neighbors may have as many praiseworthy thoughts, as many

noble suggestions as ourselves. We thank God in our hearts that we are not "as this publican," and it is the lack of those around us to discover all the fine qualities and deserving traits of our character, which often sinks us into the wretched and selfish despondency which sighs, "I am not appreciated; no one thinks as much of me as I deserve; no one understands me!" Surely there ought to be an easy remedy for this diseased fancy in one look at our blessed Master! In the bright light of His perfect Humanity, dare we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think? One glance at that Character should cover our self-complacency with shame, and change our Pharisaic thanksgiving into the cry, "Lord, be merciful unto me, a sinner!" A remembrance of the patience with which the Son of God "endured the contradiction of sinners against Him," should bring us humbly down upon our knees in gratitude for whatever love and friendship we may have found upon the earth, feeling that we have received richly above what we have deserved. In our selfishness we had become absorbed with the idea of our own importance,



and losing sight of the great standard by which we must all be judged, we had felt, as Faber expresses it :

“ All the world engrossed with judging  
My merit or my blame ;  
Its warmest praise seems an ungracious grudging  
Of praise which I might claim.”

Let us try to keep a right estimate of ourselves before our eyes, by “looking unto Jesus.” We will not make so exacting a demand upon the admiration or appreciation of others if we do this. And let us remember, further, that there is One who knows every good impulse, every struggling aspiration of our hearts, and who gives them full value in His appreciation of us. There is One who understands us as thoroughly and as sympathetically as we could possibly wish. He loves us so dearly that He is quick to seize every point of merit, every slightest sign of improvement, and He will give us richly of His bounty, rewarding us with a liberality beyond, far beyond, our poor deserving.

Depression is, furthermore, encouraged by an undue indulgence of the imagination. The imagination of man is a dangerous gift ; great

in its capacity for good, but great in a like degree in its capacity for evil. If diverted from its only true channel and exercise in the contemplation of the glory of God, the imagination becomes vain, and the foolish heart is darkened. We indulge ourselves too often in the erection of air-castles, picturing to ourselves what our lives might be, and filling our minds with dissatisfaction of the realities of our existence. A false view of life and its object is thus engendered in the mind. We see everything through a haze of unhealthy sentiment, and steep ourselves in enervating romance until nothing prosaic can satisfy us, and we "sigh among our narrow days," and shrink from the contact with daily duty, envying the happier souls for whom destiny seems to have reserved the poetry of life. "Every ship is a romantic object except that we sail in. Embark, and the romance quits our vessel, and hangs on every other sail in the horizon. Our life looks trivial, and we shun to record it," says Emerson. If we would guard against "the blues," let us look life in the face cheerfully and honestly, "casting down imaginations," building no unreal and fantastic

air-castles, but satisfying our hearts with the thoughts of the beauties of heaven, the joys of our life in Christ, the majesty of our God ; and we will find that these dreams of the soul will not leave a bitterness behind them, but will suffuse every trivial task of daily life with a heavenly glory which will make duty gladsome, and change the hardest prose into sweetest poetry. Even without the over-indulgence of the imagination, life will sometimes appear monotonous, and the saddest of depression will sink into our hearts from very weariness of endless routine, plodding forward day by day without apparent progress, like the horse in a treadmill. But even the poor horse in his monotonous going, seemingly accomplishing nothing, is working better than he knows. The work is being done, although he can not now see his usefulness. Our lives may be weary and monotonous, many lives are, but remember that a patient continuance in the most wearisome and unattractive routine will bring its reward at last, if carried out in the spirit of holy and sanctified endeavor. Do not despair because your life seems useless, your duties mean and trivial. In the most

uneventful and prosaic life there are duties to perform, temptations to overcome, virtues to be trained and cultivated. We are all called to a "high calling," and we can all of us claim the promises given to "him that overcometh" if we stand fast to the end.

"No life

Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife  
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.  
The spirits of just men made perfect on high,  
The army of martyrs who stand by the Throne  
And gaze into the Face that makes glorious their own,  
Know this surely, at last. Honest love, honest sorrow,  
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow,  
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make  
weary?

The heart they have saddened, the life they leave  
dreary?

Hush! the sevenfold heavens to the voice of the  
Spirit


Echo: He that o'ercometh shall all things inherit."

And, lastly, the great and prevailing cause for all depression, the instigator to all vague and unaccountable melancholy, lies in the want of an aim, the lack of a fixed and earnest purpose of life. Any aim will rouse the energies, enlarge the heart, quicken the blood,

and give fresh vigor to the whole life. Something to work for, to strive after, to struggle to attain, chases the shadows from the mind and cheers the soul. Active occupation, especially occupation which one loves, in which one's heart is, will almost preclude the possibility of "the blues." But this aim must be lasting, this occupation must be such as can not become monotonous, this purpose must be capable of *filling* our souls. And only one aim, one purpose, occupation for one end, can be such. Need I say what it is? There is one aim which every one can have, no matter what their condition or circumstances—it is the aim of *holiness*. There is one purpose which can inspire every heart, and which will increase in attraction and intensity with every year—it is the purpose to become one with our Saviour. There is occupation which will never fail, and which is so varied, and so rich in blessing, that it can never lose its charm, or weary us with its monotony; it is work for God, service done to Him.

Truly, the Christian should never be causelessly depressed. Trials will come, sorrow

will be laid upon us; there will be times of great affliction sent to our souls, for God chasteneth whom He loveth; and when suffering is given us to bear, we may weep and grieve, even in our resignation to the Divine Will, for our Master Himself has said, "Blessed are they that mourn." But to be despondent, disheartened, *blue*, must always be a source of shame to the soul who should have the wells of inner joy always bubbling up in his heart, and who has a Master to love and to work for, whose words are: "Let not your heart be troubled."


"LL our instincts waking suddenly  
Within the soul, like infants from their sleep,  
That stretch their arms into the dark and  
weep,

Thy voice can still. The stricken heart, bereft  
Of all its brood of singing hopes, and left  
'Mid leafless boughs a cold forsaken nest  
With snow-flakes in it, folded in Thy breast,  
Doth lose its deadly chill; and grief that creeps  
Unto Thy side for shelter, finding there  
The wounds deep cleft, forgets its moan and weeps  
Calm quiet tears; and on Thy forehead Care  
Hath looked, until its thorns, no longer bare,



Put forth pale roses. Pain on Thee doth press  
Its quivering cheek, and all the weariness,  
The want that keep their silence, till from Thee  
They hear the gracious summons, none beside  
Hath spoken to the world-worn, 'Come to Me,'  
Tell forth their heavy secrets!"

DORA GREENWELL.


“OW insipid and foolish a thing were life if there were nothing laid upon us to do. What is it, on the other hand, but the zest and glory of life, that something good and great, something really worthy to be done, is laid upon us. It is not self-indulgence allowed, but victory achieved, that can make a fit happiness for man.”—BUSHNELL.

## XIV.

## CHRISTIAN JOY.

*"Now the God of hope fill you with  
all joy and peace in believing."*—

ROMANS XV. 13.

OY is one of the clearly expressed legacies of our Master to His followers. Jesus Christ desired that *His joy* might remain with us. Does it not seem a strange wish? Had the "Man of Sorrows" any joy to leave to His heirs? If He had desired that His sorrows might remain with us, in order that we might be made "perfect through suffering," we could understand it better, for surely His life had been one of grief and trouble; but to leave us the heritage of His *joy*, does it not seem a poor and chimerical legacy?

The words of our Saviour have always a depth of meaning only to be learned by

thoughtful study, a fulness of truth which grows with our meditation upon them. In searching for some of the springs of that joy which He desires to share with us, we may reach a deeper understanding of its reality of blessedness.

Scattered here and there throughout the New Testament are given reasons for joyousness which at first sight seem only to add to our bewilderment. St. Peter says: "Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." A strange cause for rejoicing, surely! Were the very sufferings of Christ one of the sources of His joy? In order to understand this "divine depth of sorrow" where it strikes through the external suffering to find the sources of purest joy, we must remember in what cause and for what purpose our Master became "acquainted with grief." It was a voluntary self-sacrifice for those He loved. Strange mystery of love for what seems so unlovable, though it be, this is one of the secret sources of our Saviour's joy. And it is one in which He can invite our participation. St. Paul has fathomed the meaning of this blessedness when he writes: "Who now

rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." There is a joy, deep and tender, in the bearing of suffering for those we love. Have we not felt this? Have there not been times when we have rejoiced in the fatigue or pain which we have borne voluntarily for some dearly loved one? It is a joy so pure, so exalted, so ethereal, that one must needs feel it to understand it, but having once felt it, we begin faintly to discern what the joy, real and inspiring, must have been of Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us." To see the load lifted from some dear one's shoulders by our efforts, to procure the pardon of a loved offender by sharing his punishment—ah, there is a self-forgetful joy in this which expands the soul, and makes us step lightly under the heaviest weight of suffering. This was one of the joys of Jesus. Is it not one which we may inherit? May we not labor for others, suffer for them, if need be die for them, and in a life of self-sacrificing love find a source of joy clear and never-failing? To be a partaker of Christ's sufferings, if actuated by the same motives, and sustained by His

sympathy, (for to become a "partaker" with Him knits us to Him in a bond of fellowship which gives an additional joy to our heaviest sorrow,) will be a cause of true rejoicing.

Another joy which comes to us disguised as a sorrow is mentioned by the Apostle when he says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." A joy to be tempted! To have the enemy shake the very foundations of our walls! To have the serpent creep into our gardens! To feel the necessity of constant watching, continual fighting! What joy is there in this? It is the joy of difficulty overcome, of training perfected, that wells up in the heart after a well-resisted temptation. Ask the soldier if there is no joy in having withstood successfully the assaults of the foe; ask the physician if there is no joy in fighting an insidious disease and at length by patient skill driving it from its stronghold; ask the athlete if there is no joy in the careful training, which forbids all luxuries of food, all ease of body, that so, with hardened muscles and toughened flesh, a sound man through and through, he may be prepared to overcome his opponent, to win the race, to attain the prize!

"Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." This was one of the joys of our Master which He desires to leave with us, a precious legacy. He was "tempted in all points, like as we are"; He "suffered being tempted," but He overcame. And this promise rings through the ages: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." The joy of overcome temptation is not the least joy in the Christian life, and it is one through which we can draw in most blessed nearness to Him who incites us with the sympathizing encouragement, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Another source of purest joy may be traced winding like a golden thread all through the dark tissue of the Saviour's life. It is the joy of a necessary work to do, a special, individual place in the world to fill, a task to accomplish which the Father had given to Him alone.



To "do the will of Him that sent me," to "work the works of Him that sent me," to be able to say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"; to close the years of labor and trial with the words, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do";—all through the life of the Son of God do we find this ray of serenest sunshine. And in our lesser degree, surely to each of us is the possibility of this joy given. The confidence that we are sent of God, that our place needs us, that we have been put there to work for our Father, and that to each of us the "well done" may be said—what joy can be more satisfying, more "full"? Then there is the joy of a Christian "altruism"; the rejoicing with them that do rejoice. Sympathy with others in their joy may often be a fruitful source of happiness to those whose own lives at the time seem dark and joyless. And while the sins and sorrows of the world He had come to save must have added many a thorn to the Saviour's crown of suffering, surely the laughter of little children, the innocent joy of happy homes, the rejoicing of those whom He had helped and comforted, must have

given Him some moments of truest, simplest joy. There is always some happiness near us which we may, by sympathy, appropriate and enjoy.

Then, too, there is a joy in the beauty of God's revelation of Himself through Nature, which we feel must have brightened many a lonely hour of the Son of Man. He who considered the lilies, who watched the blue waters of Galilee, who climbed the mountain heights alone, to commune with His Father in the midst of the beauties which He had created, must have felt the simple joy of Nature, "God's Soliloquy," as Martineau calls it, well up fresh and full within His heart. Nature in her purity, direct from the hand of her Creator, often gives us the keenest realization of what the "peace which passeth understanding," the "joy unspeakable and full of glory," mean. "For Nature comes sometimes and says, 'I am ambassador for God.'" There are times when the beauty of sea and sky and mountain elevates the soul to an ecstasy of worship which to the Christian is pure joy. And the Christian has a claim upon nature, a power of joyous receptivity which the atheist

can not know; for he can sing with glad conviction, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." He can take them to himself as his own property, remembering that it has been said by the Apostle, "all things are yours"; he can read a tender message from his Father in every beauty which meets his eye, and the glory of the "footstool" of God will draw his thoughts to the inconceivable things "prepared for them that love Him," of which these beauties of earth are but the sign and symbol.

But it would fill a volume to enumerate the many joys which, as one meditates upon this thought, shine out in ever-increasing numbers, like the stars which gather one by one in the early evening sky, to grow and spread until the eye is bewildered with their countless twinklings. There is the joy of Faith, knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; there is the joy of Hope, "if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end"; there is the joy of Charity, which "rejoiceth

in the truth," which fills our hearts with love to God and man, brightening our lives, and vitalizing our actions.

The Christian's joys are not few or scanty ; they may be as free and full as were the joys of the Master, who leaves them to us in loving legacy.

But the mistake which often leads us to depreciate the value of this most blessed gift is that we are apt to compare the "joy and peace of believing," with the joy which may be found in unbelieving. We forget that Jesus tells us, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you," and look for the same noisy, exuberant happiness in following Him which we see in those who follow only their own pleasure. But it is just because the joy of the world is never "full," that it is noisy. True joy, joy which is full, is always quiet, it is "unspeakable." When the tide of joy is highest, there comes a stillness upon the waters. So it is with the Master's joy ; it is not noisy ; it can not be expressed ; it often overwhelms the soul with a peace that drowns words. It is the joy of the silent, glorious sunrise, flooding the earth with a splendor which


awes and quiets; it is the joy of the warm, mute Spring day, when the flowers steal noiselessly into the sunlight, opening wide their petals to its rays, when the air is laden with sweet odors, and life is filled with a dumb and subtle gladness. It is the peace of the placid lake, which lies so still among the hills that it reflects the whole sky upon its breast, and clothes its waters with a robe of heavenly blue.

And the joy of the Christian is a pure and innocent one. It is the joy of the little child, (for in our joy, as in much else, except we become as little children we can not enter into the kingdom of heaven,) bubbling up fresh and unconstrained, overflowing with harmless, unaffected gladness. It is the joy of the brook, as it ripples over the stones and obstacles in its way, singing low to itself the while, and catching miniature reflections of the sun above it in every bright little curve and angle of its waters, busy ever with its onward progress, keeping always in quiet faithfulness to its one aim, its desire "to join the brimming river."

Have we not found some meaning in the

blessed words, "That my joy may remain with you"? Is there any restless, uncertain, fleeting joy of earth to be compared to it? It is the divine Alchemist changing everything it touches into gold. Suffering, temptation, all "the ills that flesh is heir to," only add fuel to its clear flame. The joy which is the result of holiness, not of happiness, requires no outward circumstances in which to thrive and grow, no hot-house of happy chance to make it blossom. It stands, like the Tree of Life, bearing fruits all the year round.

Therefore, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice!"

UES of the rich unfolding morn,  
That, ere the glorious sun be born,  
By some soft touch invisible  
Around his path are taught to swell;—

Thou rustling breeze, so fresh and gay,  
That dancest forth at opening day,  
And brushing by with joyous wing,  
Wakenest each little leaf to sing;—

Ye fragrant clouds of dewy steam,  
By which deep grove and tangled stream



Pay, for soft rain in season given  
Their tribute to the genial heaven ;—

Why waste your treasures of delight  
Upon our thankless, joyless sight ;  
Who day by day to sin awake,  
Seldom of heaven and you partake ?

Oh ! timely happy, timely wise,  
Hearts that with rising morn arise !  
Eyes that the beam celestial view,  
Which evermore makes all things new !

New every morning is the love  
Our wakening and uprising prove ;  
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day,  
Hover around us while we pray ;  
New perils past, new sins forgiven,  
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven. . . .

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,  
As more of heaven in each we see ;  
Some softening gleam of love and prayer  
Shall dawn on every cross and care.

As for some dear familiar strain  
Untired we ask, and ask again,  
Ever, in its melodious store,  
Finding a spell unheard before ;

Such is the bliss of souls serene,  
When they have sworn, and steadfast mean,  
Counting the cost, in all t'esp  
Their God, in all themselves deny.

O could we learn that sacrifice,  
What lights would all around us rise !  
How would our hearts with wisdom talk  
Along Life's dullest, dreariest walk !

KEBLE.



















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